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Shed no tear. O shed no tear
The flower will bloom another yea
Weep no more. O weep no more
Young buds sleep in the roots white cove
Dry your eyes. O dry your eyes
For I was taught in Paradise
To ease my breast of Melodies
Shed no tear.

Overhead. look overhead
Mong the blossoms white and red
Look up, look up. I flutter now
On this fleshy pomegranate bow
See me! 'tis this silvery bill
Ever cures the good man's ill
Shed no tear. O shed no tear
The flower will bloom another y
Adieu. Adieu. I fly adieu
I vanish in the heaven's blue
Adieu Adieu

LIFE,

LETTERS, AND LITERARY REMAINS,

B 753

JOHN KEATS.

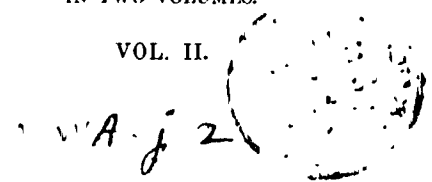
141805

EDITED BY

RICHARD MONCKTON MILNES.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



LONDON:
EDWARD MOXON, DOVER STREET.
1848.

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00141805

LIFE AND LETTERS

OF

JOHN KEATS.

THE greater part of this summer [1819] was passed at Shanklin, in the Isle of Wight, in company with Mr. Brown, who earnestly encouraged the full development of the genius of his friend. A combination of intellectual effort was here attempted which could hardly have been expected to be very successful. They were to write a play between them—Brown to supply the fable, characters, and dramatic conduct—Keats, the diction and the verse. The two composers sat opposite at a table, and as Mr. Brown sketched out the incidents of each scene, Keats translated them into his rich and ready language. As a literary diversion, this process was probably both amusing and instructive, but it does not require any profound

æsthetic pretensions to pronounce that a work of art thus created could hardly be worthy of the name. Joint compositions, except of a humorous character, are always dangerous attempts, and it is doubtful whether such a transference of faculties as they presuppose, is possible at all; at any rate, the unity of form and feeling must receive an injury hard to be compensated by any apparent improvement of the several parts. Nay, it is quite conceivable that two men, either of whom would have separately produced an effective work, should give an incomplete and hybrid character to a common production, sufficient to neutralise every excellence and annihilate every charm. A poem or a drama is not a picture, in which one artist may paint the landscape, and another the figures; and a certain imperfection and inferiority of parts is often more agreeable than an attempt at that entire completeness which it is only given to the very highest to attain. The incidents, as suggested by Mr. Brown, after some time struck Keats as too melo-dramatic, and he completed the fifth act alone. This tragedy, "Otho the Great," was sent to Drury Lane, and accepted by Elliston, with a promise to bring it forward the same season. Kean seems to have been pleased with the principal character, and to have expressed a desire to act it. The manager, however, from some unknown cause, declared himself

unable to perform his engagement, and Mr. Brown, who conducted the negotiation without mention of Keats's name, withdrew the manuscript and offered it to Covent Garden, where it met with no better fate, to the considerable annoyance of the author, who wrote to his friend Rice, "'Twould do one's heart good to see Macready in Ludolph." The unfitness of this tragedy for representation is too apparent to permit the managers of the two theatres to be accused of injustice or partiality. Had the name of Keats been as popular as it was obscure, and his previous writing as successful as it was misrepresented and misunderstood, there was not sufficient interest in either the plot or the characters to keep the play on the stage for a week. The story is confused and unreal, and the personages are mere embodied passions; the heroine and her brother walk through the whole piece like the demons of an old romance, and the historical character, who gives his name to the play, is almost excluded from its action and made a part of the pageantry. To the reader, however, the want of interest is fully redeemed by the beauty and power of passages continually recurring, and which are not cited here, only because it is pleasanter for every one to find them out for himself. There is scarce a page without some touch of a great poet, and the contrast between the glory of the diction and the poverty of

the invention is very striking. I own I doubt whether if the contrivance of the double authorship had not been resorted to, Keats could of himself, at least at this time, have produced a much better play: the failure of Coleridge's "Remorse" is an example to the point, and it is probable that the philosophic generalities of the one poet did not stand more in the way of dramatic excellence than the superhuman imagery and creative fancy of the other; it is conceivable that Keats might have written a "Midsummer's Night Dream," just as Coleridge might have written a "Hamlet;" but in both that great human element would have been wanting, which Shakspeare so wonderfully combines with abstract reflection and with fairy-land.

As soon as Keats had finished "Otho," Mr. Brown suggested to him the character and reign of King Stephen, beginning with his defeat by the Empress Maud and ending with the death of his son Eustace, as a fine subject for an English historical tragedy. This Keats undertook, assuming, however, to himself the whole conduct of the drama, and wrote some hundred and thirty lines; this task, however, soon gave place to the impressive tale of "Lamia," which had been in hand for some time, and which he wrote with great care, after much study of Dryden's versification. It is quite the perfection of narrative poetry. The story was taken from that treasure-

house of legendary philosophy, "Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy."

He contemplated a poem of some length on the subject of "Sabrina," as suggested by Milton, and often spoke of it, but I do not find any fragments of the work.

A letter to Mr. Reynolds, dated Shanklin, July 12, contains allusions to his literary progress and his pecuniary difficulties.

"You will be glad to hear, under my own hand, (though Rice says we are like Sauntering Jack and Idle Joe), how diligent I have been, and am being. I have finished the act, and in the interval of beginning the second have proceeded pretty well with 'Lamia,' finishing the first part, which consists of about four hundred lines. . . . I have great hopes of success, because I make use of my judgment more deliberately than I have yet done; but in case of failure with the world, I shall find my content. And here (as I know you have my good at heart as much as a brother), I can only repeat to you what I have said to George—that however I should like to enjoy what the competencies of life procure, I am in no wise dashed at a different prospect. I have spent too many thoughtful days, and moralised through too many nights for that, and fruitless would they be

indeed, if they did not, by degrees, make me look upon the affairs of the world with a healthy deliberation. I have of late been moulting:—not for fresh feathers and wings,—they are gone, and in their stead I hope to have a pair of patient sublunary legs. I have altered, not from a chrysalis into a butterfly, but the contrary; having two little loopholes, whence I may look out into the stage of the world; and that world, on our coming here, I almost forgot. The first time I sat down to write, I could scarcely believe in the necessity for so doing. It struck me as a great oddity. Yet the very corn which is now so beautiful, as if it had only took to ripening yesterday, is for the market; so, why should I be delicate?"

* * * *

SHANKLIN,
August 2, 1819.

MY DEAR DILKE,

I will not make my diligence an excuse for not writing to you sooner, because I consider idleness a much better plea. A man in the hurry of business of any sort, is expected, and ought to be expected, to look to everything; his mind is in a whirl, and what matters it, what whirl? But to require a letter of a man lost in idleness is the utmost cruelty; you cut the thread of his existence; you beat, you pummel him; you sell his goods and chattels;

you put him in prison; you impale him; you crucify him. If I had not put pen to paper since I saw you, this would be to me a *vi et armis* taking up before the judge; but having got over my darling lounging habits a little, it is with scarcely any pain I come to this dating from Shanklin. The Isle of Wight is but so-so, &c. Rice and I passed rather a dull time of it. I hope he will not repent coming with me. He was unwell, and I was not in very good health; and I am afraid we made each other worse by acting upon each other's spirits. We would grow as melancholy as need be. I confess I cannot bear a sick person in a house, especially alone. It weighs upon me day and night, and more so when perhaps the cause is irretrievable. Indeed, I think Rice is in a dangerous state. I have had a letter from him which speaks favourably of his health at present. Brown and I are pretty well harnessed again to our dog-cart. I mean the tragedy, which goes on sinkingly. We are thinking of introducing an elephant, but have not historical reference within reach to determine us as to Otho's menagerie. When Brown first mentioned this I took it for a joke; however, he brings such plausible reasons, and discourses so eloquently on the dramatic effect, that I am giving it a serious consideration. The Art of Poetry is not sufficient for us, and if we get on in

that as well as we do in painting, we shall, by next winter, crush the Reviews and the Royal Academy. Indeed, if Brown would take a little of my advice, he could not fail to be first pallette of his day. But, odd as it may appear, he says plainly that he cannot see any force in my plea of putting skies in the back-ground, and leaving Indian-ink out of an ash-tree. The other day he was sketching Shanklin Church, and as I saw how the business was going on, I challenged him to a trial of skill: he lent me pencil and paper. We keep the sketches to contend for the prize at the Gallery. I will not say whose I think best, but really I do not think Brown's done to the top of the Art.

A word or two on the Isle of Wight. I have been no further than Steephill. If I may guess, I should [say] that there is no finer part in the island than from this place to Steephill. I do not hesitate to say it is fine. Bonchurch is the best. But I have been so many finer walks, with a back-ground of lake and mountain, instead of the sea, that I am not much touched with it, though I credit it for all the surprise I should have felt if it had taken my cockney maidenhead. But I may call myself an old stager in the picturesque, and unless it be something very large and overpowering, I cannot receive any extraordinary relish.

I am sorry to hear that Charles is so much oppressed at Westminster, though I am sure it will be the finest touchstone for his metal in the world. His troubles will grow, day by day, less, as his age and strength increase. The very first battle he wins will lift him from the tribe of Manasseh. I do not know how I should feel were I a father, but I hope I should strive with all my power not to let the present trouble me. When your boy shall be twenty, ask him about his childish troubles, and he will have no more memory of them than you have of yours.

So Reynolds's piece succeeded: that is all well. Papers have, with thanks, been duly received. We leave this place on the 13th, and will let you know where we may be a few days after. Brown says he will write when the fit comes on him. If you will stand law expenses I 'll beat him into one before his time.

Your sincere friend,
JOHN KEATS.

In August, the friends removed to Winchester, where Mr. Brown, however, soon left him alone. This was always a favourite residence of Keats: the noble cathedral and its quiet close—the green sward and elm-tree walks, were especially agreeable to him. He wrote thence the following letters and extracts:—

To Mr. Haydon.

I came here in the hopes of getting a library, but there is none: the High Street is as quiet as a lamb. At Mr. Cross's is a very interesting picture of Albert Durer, who, being alive in such warlike times, was perhaps forced to paint in his gauntlets, so we must make all allowances.

* * * *

I have done nothing, except for the amusement of a few people who refine upon their feelings till anything in the *un*-understandable way will go down with them. I have no cause to complain, because I am certain anything really fine will in these days be felt. I have no doubt that if I had written "Othello" I should have been cheered. I shall go on with patience.

To Mr. Bailey.

We removed to Winchester for the convenience of a library, and find it an exceedingly pleasant town, enriched with a beautiful cathedral, and surrounded by a fresh-looking country. We are in tolerably good and cheap lodgings. Within these two months I have written fifteen hundred lines, most of which, besides many more of prior compo-

sition, you will probably see by next winter. I have written two tales, one from Boccacio, called the "Pot of Basil," and another called "St. Agnes' Eve," on a popular superstition, and a third called "Lamia" (half-finished). I have also been writing parts of my "Hyperion," and completed four acts of a tragedy. It was the opinion of most of my friends that I should never be able to write a scene: I will endeavour to wipe away the prejudice. I sincerely hope you will be pleased when my labours, since we last saw each other, shall reach you. One of my ambitions is to make as great a revolution in modern dramatic writing as Kean has done in acting. Another, to upset the drawling of the blue-stocking literary world. If, in the course of a few years, I do these two things, I ought to die content, and my friends should drink a dozen of claret on my tomb. I am convinced more and more every day, that (excepting the human-friend philosopher), a fine writer is the most genuine being in the world. Shakspeare and the "Paradise Lost" every day become greater wonders to me. I look upon fine phrases like a lover.

I was glad to see, by a passage of one of Brown's letters, some time ago, from the North, that you were in such good spirits. Since that, you have been married, and in congratulating you, I wish you every continuance of them. Present my respects to

Mrs. Bailey. This sounds oddly to me, and I dare say I do it awkwardly enough; but I suppose by this time it is nothing new to you.

Brown's remembrances to you. As far as I know, we shall remain at Winchester for a goodish while.

Ever your sincere friend,

JOHN KEATS.

WINCHESTER,
23rd August, 1819.

MY DEAR TAYLOR,

* * * *

I feel every confidence that, if I choose, I may be a popular writer. That I will never be; but for all that I will get a livelihood. I equally dislike the favour of the public with the love of a woman. They are both a cloying treacle to the wings of independence. I shall now consider them (the people) as debtors to me for verses, not myself to them for admiration, which I can do without. I have of late been indulging my spleen by composing a preface AT them; after all resolving never to write a preface at all. "*There* are so many verses," would I have said to them; "give so much means for me to buy pleasure with, as a relief to my hours of labour." You will observe at the end of this, if you put down

the letter, "How a solitary life engenders pride and egotism!" True—I know it does: but this pride and egotism will enable me to write finer things than anything else could, so I will indulge it. Just so much as I am humbled by the genius above my grasp, am I exalted and look with hate and contempt upon the literary world. A drummer-boy who holds out his hand familiarly to a field-marshal,—that drummer-boy with me is the good word and favour of the public. Who could wish to be among the common-place crowd of the little-famous, who are each individually lost in a throng made up of themselves? Is this worth louting or playing the hypocrite for? To beg suffrages for a seat on the benches of a myriad-aristocracy in letters? This is not wise—I am not a wise man. 'Tis pride. I will give you a definition of a proud man. He is a man who has neither vanity nor wisdom—one filled with hatred cannot be vain, neither can he be wise. Pardon me for hammering instead of writing. Remember me to Woodhouse, Hessey, and all in Percy Street.

Ever yours sincerely,

JOHN KEATS.

WINCHESTER,
August 25, [1819.]

MY DEAR REYNOLDS,

By this post I write to Rice, who will tell you why we have left Shanklin, and how we like this place. I have indeed scarcely anything else to say, leading so monotonous a life, unless I was to give you a history of sensations and day nightmares. You would not find me at all unhappy in it, as all my thoughts and feelings, which are of the selfish nature, home speculations, every day continue to make me more iron. I am convinced more and more, every day, that fine writing is, next to fine doing, the top thing in the world; the "Paradise Lost" becomes a greater wonder. The more I know what my diligence may in time probably effect, the more does my heart distend with pride and obstinacy. I feel it in my power to become a popular writer. I feel it in my power to refuse the poisonous suffrage of a public. My own being, which I know to be, becomes of more consequence to me than the crowds of shadows in the shape of men and women that inhabit a kingdom. The soul is a world of itself, and has enough to do in its own home. Those whom I know already, and who have grown as it were a part of myself, I could not do without; but for the rest of mankind, they are as much a dream

to me as Milton's "Hierarchies." I think if I had a free and healthy and lasting organisation of heart, and lungs as strong as an ox, so as to be able [to bear] unhurt the shock of extreme thought and sensation without weariness, I could pass my life very nearly alone, though it should last eighty years. But I feel my body too weak to support me to this height; I am obliged continually to check myself, and be nothing.

It would be vain for me to endeavour after a more reasonable manner of writing to you. I have nothing to speak of but myself, and what can I say but what I feel? If you should have any reason to regret this state of excitement in me, I will turn the tide of your feelings in the right channel, by mentioning that it is the only state for the best sort of poetry—that is all I care for, all I live for. Forgive me for not filling up the whole sheet; letters become so irksome to me, that the next time I leave London I shall petition them all to be spared to me. To give me credit for constancy, and at the same time waive letter writing, will be the highest indulgence I can think of.

Ever your affectionate friend,

JOHN KEATS.

WINCHESTER,
Wednesday Evening.

MY DEAR DILKE,

Whatever I take to, for the time, I cannot leave off in a hurry; letter-writing is the go now; I have consumed a quire at least. You must give me credit, now, for a free letter, when it is in reality an interested one on two points, the one requestive, the other verging to the pros and cons. As I expect they will lead me to seeing and conferring with you for a short time, I shall not enter at all upon a letter I have lately received from George, of not the most comfortable intelligence, but proceed to these two points, which, if you can Hume out into sections and subsections, for my edification, you will oblige me. The first I shall begin upon; the other will follow like a tail to a comet. I have written to Brown on the subject, and can but go over the same ground with you in a very short time, it not being more in length than the ordinary paces between the wickets. It concerns a resolution I have taken to endeavour to acquire something by temporary writing in periodical works. You must agree with me how unwise it is to keep feeding upon hopes, which depending so much on the state of temper and imagination, appear gloomy or bright, near or afar

off, just as it happens. Now an act has three parts—to act, to do, and to perform—I mean I should *do* something for my immediate welfare. Even if I am swept away like a spider from a drawing-room, I am determined to spin—homespun, anything for sale. Yea, I will traffic, anything but mortgage my brain to Blackwood. I am determined not to lie like a dead lump. You may say I want tact. Thr⁺ is easily acquired. You may be up to the slang of a cock-pit in three battles. It is fortunate I have not, before this, been tempted to venture on the common. I should, a year or two ago, have spoken my mind on every subject with the utmost simplicity. I hope I have learned a little better, and am confident I shall be able to cheat as well as any literary Jew of the market, and shine up an article on anything, without much knowledge of the subject, aye, like an orange. I would willingly have recourse to other means. I cannot; I am fit for nothing but literature. Wait for the issue of this tragedy? No: there cannot be greater uncertainties, east, west, north, and south, than concerning dramatic composition. How many months must I wait! Had I not better begin to look about me now? If better events supersede this necessity, what harm will be done? I have no trust whatever on poetry. I don't wonder at it: the marvel is to me how people read

so much of it. I think you will see the reasonableness of my plan. To forward it, I purpose living in cheap lodgings in town, that I may be in the reach of books and information, of which there is here a plentiful lack. If I can [find] any place tolerably comfortable, I will settle myself and fag till I can afford to buy pleasure, which, if [I] never can afford, I must go without. Talking of pleasure, this moment I was writing with one hand, and with the other holding to my mouth a nectarine. Good God, how fine! It went down soft, pulpy, slushy, oozy—all its delicious *embonpoint* melted down my throat like a large beatified strawberry. Now I come to my request. Should you like me for a neighbour again? Come, plump it out, I won't blush. I should also be in the neighbourhood of Mrs. Wylie, which I should be glad of, though that of course does not influence me. Therefore will you look about Rodney Street for a couple of rooms for me—rooms like the gallant's legs in Massinger's time, "as good as the times allow, Sir!" I have written to-day to Reynolds, and to Woodhouse. Do you know him? He is a friend of Taylor's, at whom Brown has taken one of his funny odd dislikes. I'm sure he's wrong, because Woodhouse likes my poetry—conclusive. I ask your opinion, and yet I must say to you, as to him (Brown), that if you have anything to say against

it I shall be as obstinate and heady as a Radical. By the "Examiners" coming in your handwriting you must be in town. They have put me into spirits. Notwithstanding my aristocratic temper, I cannot help being very much pleased with the present public proceedings. I hope sincerely I shall be able to put a mite of help to the liberal side of the question before I die. If you should have left town again (for your holidays cannot be up yet), let me know when this is forwarded to you. A most extraordinary mischance has befallen two letters I wrote Brown—one from London, whither I was obliged to go on business for George; the other from this place since my return. I can't make it out. I am excessively sorry for it. I shall hear from Brown and from you almost together, for I have sent him a letter to-day.

Ever your sincere friend,

JOHN KEATS.

WINCHESTER,
Sept. 5 [1819].

MY DEAR TAYLOR,

This morning I received yours of the 2nd, and with it a letter from Hessey, inclosing a bank post bill of £30, an ample sum I assure you—more I had no thought of. You should not have delayed so

long in Fleet Street; leading an inactive life as you did was breathing poison: you will find the country air do more for you than you expect. But it must be proper country air. You must choose a spot. What sort of a place is Retford? You should have a dry, gravelly, barren, elevated country, open to the currents of air, and such a place is generally furnished with the finest springs. The neighbourhood of a rich, inclosed, fulsome, manured, arable land, especially in a valley, and almost as bad on a flat, would be almost as bad as the smoke of Fleet Street. Such a place as this was Shanklin, only open to the south-east, and surrounded by hills in every other direction. From this south-east came the damps from the sea, which, having no egress, the air would for days together take on an unhealthy idiosyncrasy altogether enervating and weakening as a city smoke. I felt it very much. Since I have been here in Winchester I have been improving in health: it is not so confined, and there is, on one side of the city, a dry chalky down, where the air is worth sixpence a pint. So if you do not get better at Retford, do not impute it to your own weakness until you have well considered the nature of the air and soil—especially as Autumn is encroaching—for the Autumn fog over a rich land is like the steam from cabbage water. What makes the great difference between

valesmen, flatlandmen, and mountaineers? The cultivation of the earth in a great measure. Our health, temperament, and disposition, are taken more (notwithstanding the contradiction of the history of Cain and Abel) from the air we breathe, than is generally imagined. See the difference between a peasant and a butcher. I am convinced a great cause of it is the difference of the air they breathe: the one takes his mingled with the fume of slaughter, the other from the dank exhalement from the glebe; the teeming damp that comes up from the plough-furrow is of more effect in taming the fierceness of a strong man than his labour. Let him be mowing furze upon a mountain, and at the day's end his thoughts will run upon a pick-axe if he ever had handled one;—let him leave the plough, and he will think quietly of his supper. Agriculture is the tamer of men—the steam from the earth is like drinking their mother's milk—it enervates their nature. This appears a great cause of the imbecility of the Chinese: and if this sort of atmosphere is a mitigation to the energies of a strong man, how much more must it injure a weak one, unoccupied, unexercised. For what is the cause of so many men maintaining a good state in cities, but occupation? An idle man, a man who is not sensitively alive to self-interest, in a city, cannot continue long in good

health. This is easily explained. If you were to walk leisurely through an unwholesome path in the fens, with a little horror of them, you would be sure to have your ague. But let Macbeth cross the same path, with the dagger in the air leading him on, and he would never have an ague or anything like it. You should give these things a serious consideration. Notts, I believe, is a flat country. You should be on the slope of one of the dry barren hills in Somersetshire. I am convinced there is as harmful air to be breathed in the country as in town.

I am greatly obliged to you for your letter. Perhaps, if you had had strength and spirits enough, you would have felt offended by my offering a note of hand, or, rather, expressed it. However, I am sure you will give me credit for not in anywise mistrusting you; or imagining that you would take advantage of any power I might give you over me. No, it proceeded from my serious resolve not to be a gratuitous borrower, from a great desire to be correct in money matters, to have in my desk the chronicles of them to refer to, and know my worldly non-estate: besides, in case of my death, such documents would be but just, if merely as memorials of the friendly turns I had done to me.

Had I known of your illness I should not have written in such fiery phrase in my first letter. I

hope that shortly you will be able to bear six times as much.

Brown likes the tragedy very much, but he is not a fit judge of it, as I have only acted as midwife to his plot, and of course he will be fond of his child. I do not think I can make you any extracts without spoiling the effect of the whole when you come to read it. I hope you will then not think my labour mispent. Since I finished it I have finished "Lamia," and am now occupied in revising "St. Agnes' Eve," and studying Italian. Ariosto I find as diffuse, in parts, as Spenser. I understand completely the difference between them. I will cross the letter with some lines from "Lamia."

Brown's kindest remembrances to you, and I am ever your most sincere friend,

JOHN KEATS.

I shall be alone here for three weeks, expecting account of your health.

WINCHESTER,
22*nd Sept.* 1819.

MY DEAR REYNOLDS,

I was very glad to hear from Woodhouse that you would meet in the country. I hope you will pass some pleasant time together; which I wish to

make pleasanter by a brace of letters, very highly to be estimated, as really I have had very bad luck with this sort of game this season. I "kepen in solitarinesse," for Brown has gone a-visiting. I am surprised myself at the pleasure I live alone in. I can give you no news of the place here, or any other idea of it but what I have to this effect written to George. Yesterday, I say to him, was a grand day for Winchester. They elected a mayor. It was indeed high time the place should receive some sort of excitement. There was nothing going on—all asleep—not an old maid's sedan returning from a card-party; and if any old women got tipsy at christenings they did not expose it in the streets.

The side streets here are excessively maiden-lady like; the door-steps always fresh from the flannel. The knockers have a staid, serious, nay, almost awful quietness about them. I never saw so quiet a collection of lions' and rams' heads. The doors [are] most part black, with a little brass handle just above the keyhole, so that in Winchester a man may very quietly shut himself out of his own house.

How beautiful the season is now. How fine the air—a temperate sharpness about it. Really, without joking, chaste weather—Dian skies. I never liked stubble-fields so much as now—aye, better than the chilly green of the Spring. Somehow, a stubble

field looks warm, in the same way that some pictures look warm. This struck me so much in my Sunday's walk that I composed upon it.*

"Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness," &c.

I hope you are better employed than in gaping after weather. I have been, at different times, so happy as not to know what weather it was. No, I will not copy a parcel of verses. I always somehow associate Chatterton with Autumn. He is the purest writer in the English language. He has no French idiom or particles, like Chaucer; 'tis genuine English idiom in English words. I have given up "Hyperion,"—there were too many Miltonic inversions in it —Miltonic verse cannot be written but in an artful, or, rather, artist's humour. I wish to give myself up to other sensations. English ought to be kept up. It may be interesting to you to pick out some lines from "Hyperion," and put a mark, +, to the false beauty, proceeding from art, and 1, 2, to the true voice of feeling. Upon my soul, 'twas imagination; I cannot make the distinction—every now and then there is a Miltonic intonation—but I cannot make the division properly. The fact is, I must take a walk; for I am writing a long letter to George, and have been

* See the fine lines, "To Autumn," in the collected works.

employed at it all the morning. You will ask, have I heard from George? I am sorry to say, not the best news—I hope for better. This is the reason, among others, that if I write to you it must be in such a scrap-like way. I have no meridian to date interests from, or measure circumstances. To-night I am all in a mist: I scarcely know what 's what. But you, knowing my unsteady and vagarish disposition, will guess that all this turmoil will be settled by to-morrow morning. It strikes me to-night that I have led a very odd sort of life for the two or three last years—here and there, no anchor—I am glad of it. If you can get a peep at Babbicomb before you leave the country, do. I think it the finest place I have seen, or is to be seen, in the south. There is a cottage there I took warm water at, that made up for the tea. I have lately shirk'd some friends of ours, and I advise you to do the same. I mean the blue-devils—I am never at home to them. You need not fear them while you remain in Devonshire. There will be some of the family waiting for you at the coach-office—but go by another coach.

I shall beg leave to have a third opinion in the first discussion you have with Woodhouse—just half-way between both. You know I will not give up any argument. In my walk to-day, I stoop'd under a railing that lay across my path, and asked myself

"why I did not get over;" "Because," answered I, "no one wanted to force you under." I would give a guinea to be a reasonable man—good, sound sense—a says-what-he-thinks-and-does-what-he-says-man—and did not take snuff. They say men near death, however mad they may have been, come to their senses: I hope I shall here in this letter; there is a decent space to be very sensible in—many a good proverb has been in less—nay, I have heard of the statutes at large being changed into the statutes at small, and printed for a watch-paper.

Your sisters, by this time, must have got the Devonshire "ees"—short ees—you know 'em; they are the prettiest ees in the language. O, how I admire the middle-sized delicate Devonshire girls of about fifteen. There was one at an inn door holding a quartern of brandy; the very thought of her kept me warm a whole stage—and a sixteen-miler too. "You 'll pardon me for being jocular."

Ever your affectionate friend,

JOHN KEATS.

Sept. 23, 1819.

To MR. BROWN.

"Now I am going to enter on the subject of self. It is quite time I should set myself doing something, and live no longer upon hopes. I have

never yet exerted myself. I am getting into an idle-minded, vicious way of life, almost content to live upon others. In no period of my life have I acted with any self-will, but in throwing up the apothecary profession. That I do not repent of. Look at ——, if he was not in the law, he would be acquiring, by his abilities, something towards his support. My occupation is entirely literary; I will do so, too. I will write, on the liberal side of the question, for whoever will pay me. I have not known yet what it is to be diligent. I purpose living in town in a cheap lodging, and endeavouring, for a beginning, to get the theatricals of some paper. When I can afford to compose deliberate poems, I will. I shall be in expectation of an answer to this. Look on my side of the question. I am convinced I am right. Suppose the tragedy should succeed,—there will be no harm done. And here I will take an opportunity of making a remark or two on our friendship, and on all your good offices to me. I have a natural timidity of mind in these matters; liking better to take the feeling between us for granted, than to speak of it. But, good God! what a short while you have known me! I feel it a sort of duty thus to recapitulate, however unpleasant it may be to you. You have been living for others more than any man I know. This is a vexation to me, because it has been depriving

you, in the very prime of your life, of pleasures which it was your duty to procure. As I am speaking in general terms, this may appear nonsense; you, perhaps, will not understand it; but if you can go over, day by day, any month of the last year, you will know what I mean. On the whole, however, this is a subject that I cannot express myself upon. I speculate upon it frequently; and, believe me, the end of my speculations is always an anxiety for your happiness. This anxiety will not be one of the least incitements to the plan I purpose pursuing. I had got into a habit of mind of looking towards you as a help in all difficulties. This very habit would be the parent of idleness and difficulties. You will see it is a duty I owe myself to break the neck of it. I do nothing for my subsistence—make no exertion. At the end of another year you shall applaud me, not for verses, but for conduct. While I have some immediate cash, I had better settle myself quietly, and fag on as others do. I shall apply to Hazlitt, who knows the market as well as any one, for something to bring me in a few pounds as soon as possible. I shall not suffer my pride to hinder me. The whisper may go round; I shall not hear it. If I can get an article in the 'Edinburgh,' I will. One must not be delicate. Nor let this disturb you longer than a moment. I look forward,

with a good hope that we shall one day be passing free, untrammelled, unanxious time together. That can never be if I continue a dead lump. I shall be expecting anxiously an answer from you. If it does not arrive in a few days this will have miscarried, and I shall come straight to ——— before I go to town, which you, I am sure, will agree had better be done while I still have some ready cash. By the middle of October I shall expect you in London. We will then set at the theatres. If you have anything to gainsay, I shall be even as the deaf adder which stoppeth her ears."

On the same day he wrote another letter, having received one from Mr. Brown in the interval. He again spoke of his purpose.

"Do not suffer me to disturb you unpleasantly: I do not mean that you should not suffer me to occupy your thoughts, but to occupy them pleasantly; for, I assure you, I am as far from being unhappy as possible. Imaginary grievances have always been more my torment than real ones. You know this well. Real ones will never have any other effect upon me than to stimulate me to get out of or avoid them. This is easily accounted for. Our imaginary woes are conjured up by our passions, and are fostered by

passionate feeling: our real ones come of themselves, and are opposed by an abstract exertion of mind. Real grievances are displacers of passion. The imaginary nail a man down for a sufferer, as on a cross; the real spur him up into an agent. I wish, at one view, you would see my heart towards you. 'Tis only from a high tone of feeling that I can put that word upon paper—out of poetry. I ought to have waited for your answer to my last before I wrote this. I felt, however, compelled to make a rejoinder to yours. I had written to —— on the subject of my last, I scarcely know whether I shall send my letter now. I think he would approve of my plan; it is so evident. Nay, I am convinced, out and out, that by prosing for a while in periodical works, I may maintain myself decently."

The gloomy tone of this correspondence soon brought Mr. Brown to Winchester. Up to that period Keats had always expressed himself most averse to writing for any periodical publication. The short contributions to the "Champion" were rather acts of friendship than literary labours. But now Mr. Brown, knowing what his pecuniary circumstances were, and painfully conscious that the time spent in the creation of those works which were destined to be the delight and solace of thousands of his

fellow-creatures, must be unprofitable to him in procuring the necessities of life, and, above all, estimating at its due value that spirit of independence which shrinks from materialising the obligations of friendship into daily bread, gave every encouragement to these designs, and only remonstrated against the project of the following note, both on account of the pain he would himself suffer from the privation of Keats's society, but from the belief that the scheme of life would not be successful.

WINCHESTER,
Oct. 1st, [1819.]

MY DEAR DILKE,

For sundry reasons which I will explain to you when I come to town, I have to request you will do me a great favour, as I must call it, knowing how great a bore it is. That your imagination may not have time to take too great an alarm, I state immediately that I want you to hire me a couple of rooms (a sitting-room and bed-room for myself alone) in Westminster. Quietness and cheapness are the essentials; but as I shall, with Brown, be returned by next Friday, you cannot, in that space, have sufficient time to make any choice selection, and need not be very particular, as I can, when on the spot, suit myself at leisure. Brown bids me remind

you not to send the "Examiners" after the third. Tell Mrs. D. I am obliged to her for the late ones, which I see are directed in her hand. Excuse this mere business-letter, for I assure you I have not a syllable at hand on any subject in the world.

Your sincere friend,

JOHN KEATS.

The friends returned to town together, and Keats took possession of his new abode. But he had miscalculated his own powers of endurance: the enforced absence from his friends was too much for him, and a still stronger impulse drew him back again to Hampstead. She, whose name

> "Was ever on his lips
> But never on his tongue,"

exercised too mighty a control over his being for him to remain at a distance, which was neither absence nor presence, and he soon returned to where at least he could rest his eyes on her habitation, and enjoy each chance opportunity of her society. I find a fragment written about this date, and under this inspiration, but it is still an interesting study of the human heart, to see how few traces remain in his outward literary life of that passion which was his real existence.

TO ———.

What can I do to drive away
Remembrance from my eyes? for they have seen,
Aye, an hour ago, my brilliant Queen!
Touch has a memory. O say, love, say,
What can I do to kill it and be free
In my old liberty?
When every fair one that I saw was fair,
Enough to catch me in but half a snare,
Not keep me there:
When, howe'or poor or particolour'd things,
My muse had wings,
And ever ready was to take her course
Whither I bent her force,
Unintellectual, yet divine to me;—
Divine, I say!—What sea-bird o'er the sea
Is a philosopher the while he goes
Winging along where the great water throes?

How shall I do
To get anew
Those moulted feathers, and so mount once more
Above, above
The reach of fluttering Love,
And make him cower lowly while I soar?
Shall I gulp wine? No, that is vulgarism,
A heresy and schism,
Foisted into the canon law of love;—
No,—wine is only sweet to happy men;
More dismal cares
Seize on me unawares,—
Where shall I learn to get my peace again?
To banish thoughts of that most hateful land,
Dungeoner of my friends, that wicked strand
Where they were wreck'd and live a wrecked life;

That monstrous region, whose dull rivers pour,
Ever from their sordid urns unto the shore,
Unown'd of any weedy-haired gods;
Whose winds, all zephyrless, hold scourging rods,
Iced in the great lakes, to afflict mankind;
Whose rank-grown forests, frosted, black, and blind,
Would fright a Dryad; whose harsh herbaged meads
Make lean and lank the starv'd ox while he feeds;
There bad flowers have no scent, birds no sweet song,
And great unerring Nature once seems wrong.

O, for some sunny spell
To dissipate the shadows of this hell!
Say they are gone,—with the new dawning light
Steps forth my lady bright!
O, let me once more rest
My soul upon that dazzling breast!
Let once again these aching arms be placed,
The tender gaolers of thy waist!
And let me feel that warm breath here and there
To spread a rapture in my very hair,—
O, the sweetness of the pain!
Give me those lips again!
Enough! Enough! it is enough for me
To dream of thee!

WENTWORTH PLACE,
Hampstead, 17th Nov. [1819.]

MY DEAR TAYLOR,

I have come to a determination not to publish anything I have now ready written; but, for all that, to publish a poem before long, and that I hope to make a fine one. As the marvellous is the most

enticing, and the surest guarantee of harmonious numbers, I have been endeavouring to persuade myself to untether Fancy, and to let her manage for herself. I and myself cannot agree about this at all. Wonders are no wonders to me. I am more at home amongst men and women. I would rather read Chaucer than Ariosto. The little dramatic skill I may as yet have, however badly it might shew in a drama, would, I think, be sufficient for a poem. I wish to diffuse the colouring of St. Agnes' Eve throughout a poem in which character and sentiment would be the figures to such drapery. Two or three such poems, if God should spare me, written in the course of the next six years, would be a famous *Gradus ad Parnassum altissimum*. I mean they would nerve me up to the writing of a few fine plays —my greatest ambition, when I do feel ambitious. I am sorry to say that is very seldom. The subject we have once or twice talked of appears a promising one —the Earl of Leicester's history. I am this morning reading Holingshed's "Elizabeth." You had some books awhile ago, you promised to send me, illustrative of my subject. If you can lay hold of them, or any other which may be serviceable to me, I know you will encourage my low-spirited muse by sending them, or rather by letting me know where our errand-cart man shall call with my little box.

I will endeavour to set myself selfishly at work on this poem that is to be.

Your sincere friend,

JOHN KEATS.

About this time he wrote this to his brother George:—

"From the time you left us our friends say I have altered so completely I am not the same person. I dare say you have altered also. Mine is not the same hand I clenched at Hammond.* We are like the relic garments of a saint, the same and not the same; for the careful monks patch it and patch it till there is not a thread of the original in it, and still they show it for St. Anthony's shirt. This is the reason why men who have been bosom-friends for a number of years afterwards meet coldly, neither of them know why. Some think I have lost that poetic fire and ardour they say I once had. The fact is, I perhaps have, but instead of that I hope I shall substitute a more thoughtful and quiet power. I am more contented to read and think, but seldom haunted with ambitious thoughts. I am scarcely content to write the best verse from the fever they leave behind. I want to compose without this fever; I hope I shall one day.

* The surgeon to whom he was apprenticed.

"You cannot imagine how well I can live alone. I told the servant to-day I was not at home to any one that called. I am not sure how I should endure loneliness and bad weather at the same time. It is beautiful weather now. I walk for an hour every day before dinner. My dear sister, I have all the "Examiners" ready for you. I will pack them up when the business with Mr. Abbey comes to a conclusion. I have dealt out your best wishes like a pack of cards, but, being always given to cheat, I have turned up ace. You see I am making game of you. I see you are not happy in America. As for pun-making, I wish it were as profitable as pin-making. There is but little business of that sort going on now. We struck for wages like the Manchester weavers, but to no purpose, for we are all out of employ. I am more lucky than some, you see, as I have an opportunity of exporting a pun,—getting into a little foreign trade, which is a comfortable thing. You have heard of Hook the farce-writer. Horace Smith was asked if he knew him. 'Oh yes,' says he, 'Hook and I are very intimate.' Brown has been taking French lessons at the cheap rate of two-and-sixpence a page, and Reynolds observed, 'Gad, the man sells his lessons so cheap, he must have stolen them.' I wish you could get change for a pun in silver

currency, and get with three-and-a-half every night into Drury pit."

In the beginning of the winter George Keats suddenly appeared in England, but remained only for a short period. On his arrival in America, with his wife, he found that their limited means required an immediate retirement into, what were then, the solitudes of the far West, but which the labour of enterprising men has now peopled with life and planted with civilisation. From Philadelphia these two children of the old world, and nearly children in life, (she was just sixteen,) proceeded to Pittsburgh and descended the Ohio to Cincinnati. Down that beautiful river, then undisturbed by the panting of the steam-boat or the tumult of inhabited shores, their lonely boat found its way to Cincinnati, where they resided for some time. George Keats paid a visit shortly after to Kentucky, where he lived in the same house with Audubon the naturalist, who, seeing him one day occupied in chopping a log, after watching him with a curious interest, exclaimed, "You will do well in this country; I could chop that log in ten minutes; you have taken near an hour; but your persistence is worth more than my expertness." A boat in which he invested his money completely failed as a speculation, and his voyage to England

seems to have been undertaken in the hope of raising capital for some more successful venture. I am unable to determine whether he took back with him any portion of what remained of John's fortune, but he did receive his share of his brother Tom's property, and he may possibly have repaid himself for what he had spent for John out of John's share. John's professional education had been so expensive that it only required a certain amount of that carelessness in money-matters incidental to men of higher natures to account for the continual embarrassment in which he found himself, without having indulged in any profligate habits. Tom's long sickness was also a great expense to the family, so that the assistance of the more prudent and fortunate brother was frequently required to make up deficiencies. This was, no doubt, the reason why, out of the 1100*l.* left by Tom, George received 440*l.*, and John little more than 200*l.* When George returned the second time to America he certainly left his brother's finances in a deplorable state; it is probable he was not aware how very small a sum remained for John's subsistence, or it would have been hardly justifiable for him to have repaid himself any portion of what he had advanced, except he was convinced that whatever he did take would be so reproductive that it was indisputably the best thing to be done with the money at

the time, whatever was to be its ultimate destination. The subject was so painful a one, and the increasing melancholy, both physical and moral, of Keats so manifest, that there can be no ground for discrediting his brother's positive assertion, that, when he left London, he had not the courage to lay before him the real state of their affairs, but that he kept to the pleasing side of things, and encouraged him in the belief that the American speculation would produce enough to restore both of them to comfortable circumstances. At the same time it might well be permitted to John's friends, who did not know the details of the affair, to be indignant at the state of almost destitution to which so noble a man was reduced, while they believed that his brother in America had the means of assisting him. But, on the other hand, after Keats's death, when George was ready to give the fullest explanation of the circumstances, when the legal administration of John's effects showed that no debts were owing to the estate, and when, without the least obligation, he offered to do his utmost to liquidate his brother's engagements, it was only just to acknowledge that they had been deceived by appearances and that they fully acquitted him of unfraternal and ungenerous conduct. Their accusations rankled long and bitterly in his mind, and were the subject of a frequent

correspondence with his friends in England. I have extracted the following portion of a letter, dated "Louisville, April 20th, 1825," as an earnest expression of his feelings, and also as giving an interesting delineation of the Poet's character, by one who knew him so well: and I am glad to find such a confirmation of what has been so often stated in these pages, that the faults of Keats's disposition were precisely the contrary of those attributed to him by common opinion.

"Louisville, *April* 20, 1825.

"* * * Your letter has in some measure relieved my mind of a load that has sorely pressed for years. I felt innocent of the unfeeling, mean, conduct imputed to me by some of my brother's friends, and knew that the knowledge of the facts would soon set that to rights; but I could not rest while under the impression that he really suffered through my not forwarding him money at the time when I promised, but had not the power. Your saying 'that he knew nothing of want, either of friends or money,' and giving proofs of the truth of it, made me breathe freely—enabled me to cherish his memory, without the feeling of having caused him misery, however unavoidably, while a living Friend and Brother. I do not doubt but that he complained of me; although he was the noblest fellow, whose soul was ever open

to my inspection, his nervous, morbid temperament at times led him to misconstrue the motives of his best friends. I have been instrumental times innumerable in correcting erroneous impressions so formed of those very persons who have been most ready to believe the stories lately circulated against me, and I almost believe that if I had remained his companion, and had had the means, as I had the wish, to have devoted my life to his fame and happiness, he might have been living at this hour. His temper did not unfold itself to you, his friend, until the vigour of his mind was somewhat impaired, and he no longer possessed the power to resist the pettishness he formerly considered he had no right to trouble his friends with. From the time we were boys at school, where we loved, jangled, and fought alternately, until we separated in 1818, I in a great measure relieved him by continual sympathy, explanation, and inexhaustible spirits and good humour, from many a bitter fit of hypochondriasm. He avoided teazing any one with his miseries but Tom and myself, and often asked our forgiveness; venting and discussing them gave him relief. I do not mean to say that he did not receive the most indulgent attention from his many devoted friends; on the contrary, I shall ever look with admiration on the exertions made for his comfort and happiness by his numerous friends. No one in

England understood his character perfectly but poor Tom, and he had not the power to divert his frequent melancholy, and eventually increased his disease most fearfully by the horrors of his own lingering death. If I did not feel fully persuaded that my motive was to acquire an independence to support us all in case of necessity, I never should forgive myself for leaving him. Some extraordinary exertion was necessary to retrieve our affairs from the gradual decline they were suffering. That exertion I made, whether wisely or not, future events had to decide. After all, Blackwood and the Quarterly, associated with our family disease, consumption, were ministers of death sufficiently venomous, cruel, and deadly, to have consigned one of less sensibility to a premature grave. I have consumed many hours in devising means to punish those literary gladiators, but am always brought to the vexing conclusion that they are invulnerable to one of my prowess. Has much been said in John's defence against those libellers both of his character and writings? His writings were fair game, and liable to be assailed by a sneaking poacher, but his character as represented by Blackwood was not. A good cudgelling should have been his reward if he had been within my reach. John was the very soul of courage and manliness, and as much like the *Holy Ghost* as *Johnny Keats*. I am much indebted for

the interest you have taken in my vindication, and will observe further for your satisfaction, that Mr. Abbey, who had the management of our money concerns, in a letter lately received, expressed himself 'satisfied that my statement of the account between John and me was correct.' He is the only person who is in possession of data to refute or confirm my story. My not having written to you seems to have been advanced as a proof of my worthlessness. If it prove anything, it proves my humility, for I can assure you, if I had known you felt one-half the interest in my fate unconnected with my brother it appears you did, the explanation would have been made when I first became acquainted there was a necessity for it.—I should never have given up a communication with the only spirits in existence who are congenial to me, and at the same time know me Understand me, when I failed to write, it was not from a diminished respect or friendliness towards you, but under the impression that I had moved out of your circle, leaving but faint traces that I had ever existed within it."

Soon after George's departure, Keats wrote to his sister-in-law, and there is certainly nothing in the letter betokening any diminution of his liveliness or sense of enjoyment. He seems, on the contrary, to

regard his brother's voyage in no serious light—probably anticipating a speedy reunion, and with pleasant plans for a future that never was to come. But these loving brothers had now met and parted for the last time, and this gay letter remains the last record of a cheerful and hopeful nature that was about to be plunged into the darkness of pain and death, and of an affection which space could not diminish, and which time preserved, till after many years of honest, useful, and laborious life, he who remained also past away, transmitting to other generations a name that genius has illustrated above the blazon of ordinary nobilities.

My dear Sister,

By the time you receive this your troubles will be over, and George have returned to you. On Henry's marriage there was a piece of bride's-cake sent me, but as it missed its way, I suppose the bearer was a conjuror, and wanted it for his own private use. Last Sunday George and I dined at ——. Your mother, with Charles, were there, and fool L——, who sent the sly disinterested shawl to Miss M——, with his own heathen name engraved in the middle of it. The evening before last we had a piano-forte dance at Mrs. Dilke's; there was little amusement in the room, but a Scotchman to hate: some persons you must have observed have a most

unpleasant effect on you, when seen speaking in profile: this Scot is the most accomplished fellow in this way I ever met with: the effect was complete; it went down like a dose of bitters, and I hope will improve my digestion. At Taylor's too there was a Scotchman, but he was not so bad, for he was as clean as he could get himself. George has introduced an American to us: I like him in a moderate way. I told him I hated Englishmen, as they were the only men I knew. He does not understand this. Who would be Braggadocio to Johnny Bull? Johnny's house is his castle, and a precious dull castle it is: how many dull castles there are in so-and-so crescent! I never wish myself a general visitor and newsmonger, but when I write to you—I should then, for a day or two, like to have the knowledge of that L——, for instance; of all the people of a wide acquaintance to tell you about, only let me have his knowledge of family affairs, and I would set them in a proper light, but, bless me, I never go anywhere.

My pen is no more garrulous than my tongue. Any third person would think I was addressing myself to a lover of scandal, but I know you do not like scandal, but you love fun; and if scandal happen to be fun, that is no fault of ours. The best thing I have heard is your shooting, for it seems you follow

the gun. I like your brothers the more I know of them, but I dislike mankind in general. Whatever people on the other side of the question may say, they cannot deny that they are always surprised at a good action, and never at a bad one. I am glad you have doves in America. "Gertrude of Wyoming," and Birkbeck's book, should be bound together as a couple of decoy-ducks; one is almost as practical as the other. I have been sitting in the sun while I wrote this, until it has become quite oppressive: the Vulcan heat is the natural heat for January. Our Irish servant has very much piqued me this morning, by saying her father is very much like my Shakspeare, only he has more colour than the engraving. If you were in England, I dare say you would be able to pick out more amusement from society than I am able to do. To me it is all as dull here as Louisville is to you. I am tired of theatres; almost all parties I chance to fall into, I know by heart; I know the different styles of talk in different places; what subjects will be started; and how it will proceed; like an acted play, from the first to the last act. I know three witty people, all distinct in their excellence—Rice, Reynolds, and Richards—Rice is the wisest—Reynolds the playfullest—Richards the out-of-the-wayest. The first makes you laugh and think; the second makes you laugh and not think;

the third puzzles your head; I admire the first, I enjoy the second, and I stare at the third; the first is claret, the second ginger-beer, the third is *crême de Byrapymdrag;* the first is inspired by Minerva, the second by Mercury, and the third by Harlequin Epigram, Esq.; the first is neat in his dress, the second careless, the third uncomfortable; the first speaks adagio, the second allegretto, and the third both together; the first is Swiftean, the second Tom Crib-ean, the third Shandean. I know three people of no wit at all, each distinct in his excellence, A., B. and C. A. is the foolishest, B. is the sulkiest, and C. is the negative; A. makes you yawn, B. makes you hate, and as for C. you never see him at all, though he were six feet high; I bear the first, I forbear the second, I am not certain that the third is; the first is gruel, the second ditch-water, and the third is spilt and ought to be wiped up; A. is inspired by Jack of the Clock, B. has been drilled by a Russian serjeant, C. they say is not his mother's true child, but she bought [him] of the man who cries "young lambs to sell." * * * * I will send you a close written sheet on the first of next month; but, for fear of missing the mail, I must finish here. God bless you, my dear sister.

Your affectionate brother,

JOHN KEATS.

The study of Italian, to which Keats [illegible] latterly much addicted, had included Ariosto, and the humorous fairy poem on which he was engaged about this time appears to me to have originated in that occupation. He has stated, in a previous passage, that he still kept enough of his old tastes to prefer reading Chaucer to Ariosto, and the delightful vagaries of the master of Italian fancy would probably not have had so much effect on him but for Mr. Brown's intimate acquaintance with, and intense enjoyment of, those frailer charms of southern song. When, in after-times, Mr. Brown himself retired to Italy, he hardly ever passed a day without translating some portion of that school of Italian poetry, and he has left behind him a complete and admirable version of the first five cantos of Bojardo's "Orlando Innamorato."

Keats had a notion of publishing this fanciful poem under a feigned name, and that of "Lucy Vaughan Lloyd" suggested itself to him from some untraceable association. He never had even made up his mind what title to give it; the "Cap and Bells" and "The Jealousies" were two he spoke of: I give here all that was written, not only because it exhibits his versatility of talent, but because it presents him, almost for the first time, in the light of a humorous writer, just at the moment of his existence when real anxieties were pressing most threateningly

upon him, when the struggle between his ever-growing passion and the miserable circumstances of his daily life was beating down his spirit, and when disease was advancing with stealthy, but not altogether unperceived, advances, to consummate by a cruel and lingering death the hard conditions of his mortal being. There is nothing in this combination which will surprise those who understand the poetic, or even the literary, nature, but I know few stronger instances of a moral phenomenon which the Hamlets of the world are for ever exhibiting to an audience that can only resolve the problem by doubting the reality of the one or the other feeling, of the mirth or of the misery.

I am unwilling to leave this, the last of Keats's literary labours, without a word of defence against the objection that might with some reason be raised against the originality of his genius, from the circumstance that it is easy to refer almost every poem he wrote to some suggestion of style and manner derived from preceding writers. From the Spenserian "Endymion," to these Ariosto-like stanzas, you can always see reflected in the mirror of his intellect the great works he is studying at the time. This is so generally the case with verse-writers, and the test has been so severely and successfully applied to many of the most noted authors of our time, that I should not

have alluded to it had I not been desirous to [illegible] Keats an access to that inmost penetralium [illegible] which is solely consecrated to original genius. The early English chronicle-dramas supplied Shakspeare with many materials and outlines for his historical plays, and the "Adamo" of Andreini had indisputably a great effect on the frame-work of "Paradise Lost;" but every one feels that these accidents rather resemble the suggestions of nature which every mind, however independent, receives and assimilates, than what is ordinarily meant by plagiarism or imitation. In the case of Keats, his literary studies were apparently the sources of his productions, and his variety and facility of composition certainly increases very much in proportion to his reading, thus clearly showing how much he owed to those who had preceded him. But let us not omit two considerations:—first, that these resemblances of form or spirit are a reproduction, not an imitation, and that while they often are what those great masters might themselves have contentedly written, they always include something which the model has not—some additional intuitive vigour; and secondly, let us never forget, that wonderful as are the poems of Keats, yet, after all, they are rather the records of a poetical education than the accomplished work of the mature artist. This is in truth the chief interest of these pages; this is what these letters so

vividly exhibit. Day by day, his imagination is extended, his fancy enriched, his taste purified; every fresh acquaintance with the motive minds of past generations leads him a step onwards in knowledge and in power; the elements of ancient genius become his own; the skill of faculties long spent revives in him; ever, like Nature herself, he gladly receives and energetically reproduces. And now we approach the consummation of this laborious work, the formation of a mind of the highest order; we hope to see the perfect fruit whose promise has been more than the perfection of noted men; we desire to sympathise with this realised idea of a great poet, from which he has ever felt himself so far, but which he yet knows he is ever approaching; we yearn to witness the full flow of this great spiritual river, whose source has long lain in the heart of the earth, and to which the streams of a thousand hills have ministered.

One night, about eleven o'clock, Keats returned home in a state of strange physical excitement—it might have appeared to those who did not know him, one of fierce intoxication. He told his friend he had been outside the stage-coach, had received a severe chill, was a little fevered, but added, "I don't feel it now." He was easily persuaded to go to bed, and as he leapt into the cold sheets, before his head was on

the pillow, he slightly coughed and said, "That is blood from my mouth; bring me the candle; let me see this blood." He gazed steadfastly for some moments at the ruddy stain, and then looking in his friend's face with an expression of sudden calmness never to be forgotten, said, "I know the colour of that blood,—it is arterial blood—I cannot be deceived in that colour; that drop is my death-warrant. I must die."

A surgeon was immediately called in, and, after being bled, Keats fell into a quiet sleep. The medical man declared his lungs to be uninjured, and the rupture not important, but he himself was of a different opinion, and with the frequent self-prescience of disease, added to his scientific knowledge, he was not to be persuaded out of his forebodings. At times, however, the love of life, inherent in active natures, got the better of his gloom. "If you would have me recover," he said to his devoted friend and constant attendant, Mr. Brown, "flatter me with a hope of happiness when I shall be well, for I am now so weak that I can be flattered into hope." "Look at my hand," he said, another day, "it is that of a man of fifty."

The advancing year brought with it such an improvement in his health and strength, as in the estimation of many almost amounted to recovery. Gleams of

his old cheerfulness returned, as the following letters evince. His own handwriting was always so clear and good as to be almost clerkly, and thus he can afford to joke at the exhibitions of his friends in that unimportant particular. In the case of Mr. Dilke, the long and useful career of that able and independent critic has been most intelligible in print to a generation of his fellow-countrymen, and his cordial appreciation and care of Keats will only add to his reputation for generosity and benevolence.

WENTWORTH PLACE,
Feb. 16, 1820.

MY DEAR RICE,

I have not been well enough to make any tolerable rejoinder to your kind letter. I will, as you advise, be very chary of my health and spirits. I am sorry to hear of your relapse and hypochondriac symptoms attending it. Let us hope for the best, as you say. I shall follow your example in looking to the future good rather than brooding upon the present ill. I have not been so worn with lengthened illnesses as you have, therefore cannot answer you on your own ground with respect to those haunting and deformed thoughts and feelings you speak of. When I have been, or supposed myself in health, I have had my share of them, especially within the last year.

I may say, that for six months before I was taken ill I had not passed a tranquil day. Either that gloom overspread me, or I was suffering under some passionate feeling, or if I turned to versify, that acerbated the poison of either sensation. The beauties of nature had lost their power over me. How astonishingly (here I must premise that illness, as far as I can judge in so short a time, has relieved my mind of a load of deceptive thoughts and images, and makes me perceive things in a truer light),—how astonishingly does the chance of leaving the world impress a sense of its natural beauties upon us! Like poor Falstaff, though I do not "babble," I think of green fields; I muse with the greatest affection on every flower I have known from my infancy—their shapes and colours are as new to me as if I had just created them with a superhuman fancy. It is because they are connected with the most thoughtless and the happiest moments of our lives. I have seen foreign flowers in hothouses, of the most beautiful nature, but I do not care a straw for them. The simple flowers of our Spring are what I want to see again.

Brown has left the inventive and taken to the imitative art. He is doing his forte, which is copying Hogarth's heads. He has just made a purchase of the Methodist Meeting picture, which gave me a horrid dream a few nights ago. I hope I shall sit

under the trees with you again in some such place as the Isle of Wight. I do not mind a game of cards in a saw-pit or waggon, but if ever you catch me on a stage-coach in the winter full against the wind, bring me down with a brace of bullets, and I promise not to 'peach. Remember me to Reynolds, and say how much I should like to hear from him: that Brown returned immediately after he went on Sunday, and that I was vexed at forgetting to ask him to lunch; for as he went towards the gate, I saw he was fatigued and hungry.

I am, my dear Rice,

Ever most sincerely yours,

JOHN KEATS.

I have broken this open to let you know I was surprised at seeing it on the table this morning, thinking it had gone long ago.

[*Postmark*, HAMPSTEAD, *March* 4, 1820.]

MY DEAR DILKE,

Since I saw you I have been gradually, too gradually perhaps, improving; and, though under an interdict with respect to animal food, living upon pseudo-victuals, Brown says I have picked up a little flesh lately. If I can keep off inflammation for the next six weeks, I trust I shall do very well. Reynolds

is going to sail on the salt seas. Brown has been mightily progressing with his Hogarth. A damn'd melancholy picture it is, and during the first week of my illness it gave me a psalm-singing nightmare that made me almost faint away in my sleep. I know I am better, for I can bear the picture. I have experienced a specimen of great politeness from Mr. Barry Cornwall. He has sent me his books. Some time ago he had given his first published book to Hunt, for me; Hunt forgot to give it, and Barry Cornwall, thinking I had received it, must have thought me a very neglectful fellow. Notwithstanding, he sent me his second book, and on my explaining that I had not received his first, he sent me that also. I shall not expect Mrs. Dilke at Hampstead next week unless the weather changes for the warmer. It is better to run no chance of a supernumerary cold in March. As for you, you must come. You must improve in your penmanship; your writing is like the speaking of a child of three years old—very understandable to its father, but to no one else. The worst is, it looks well—no, that is not the worst—the worst is, it is worse than Bailey's. Bailey's looks illegible and may perchance be read; your's looks very legible, and may perchance not be read. I would endeavour to give you a fac-simile of your word "Thistlewood" if I were not minded on the

instant that Lord Chesterfield has done some such thing to his son. Now I would not bathe in the same river with Lord C., though I had the upper hand of the stream. I am grieved that in writing and speaking it is necessary to make use of the same particles as he did. Cobbett is expected to come in. O! that I had two double plumpers for him. The ministry is not so inimical to him, but it would like to put him into Coventry. Casting my eye on the other side I see a long word written in a most vile manner, unbecoming a critic. You must recollect I have served no apprenticeship to old plays. If the only copies of the Greek and Latin authors had been made by you, Bailey, and Haydon, they were as good as lost. It has been said that the character of a man may be known by his handwriting; if the character of the age may be known by the average goodness of ours, what a slovenly age we live in. Look at Queen Elizabeth's Latin exercises and blush. Look at Milton's hand: I can't say a word for Shakespeare.

Your sincere friend,

JOHN KEATS.

Towards the end of the spring Keats's outward health was so much better that the physician recommended him to take another tour in Scotland. Mr. Brown, however, thinking him quite unfit to cope

with the chance hardships of such an expedition, generously dissuaded him, though he was so far from anticipating any rapid change in Keats's constitution that he determined to go alone and return to his friend in a few weeks. On the seventh of May the two friends parted at Gravesend, and never met again.

Keats went to lodge at Kentish Town to be near his friend Leigh Hunt, but soon returned to Hampstead, where he remained with the family of the lady to whom he was attached. In these latter letters the catastrophe of mortal sickness, accompanied by the dread of poverty, is seen gradually coming on, and the publication of his new volume hardly relieves the general gloom of the picture.

MY DEAR DILKE,

As Brown is not to be a fixture at Hampstead, I have at last made up my mind to send home all lent books. I should have seen you before this, but my mind has been at work all over the world to find out what to do. I have my choice of three things, or, at least, two,—South America, or surgeon to an Indiaman; which last, I think, will be my fate. I shall resolve in a few days. Remember me to Mrs. D. and Charles, and your father and mother.

Ever truly yours,

JOHN KEATS.

June 11.

MY DEAR TAYLOR,

In reading over the proof of "St. Agnes' Eve" since I left Fleet-street, I was struck with what appears to me an alteration in the seventh stanza very much for the worse. The passage I mean stands thus:—

> "her maiden eyes incline
> Still on the floor, while many a sweeping train
> Pass by."

'Twas originally written—

> "her maiden eyes divine
> Fix'd on the floor, saw many a sweeping train
> Pass by."

My meaning is quite destroyed in the alteration. I do not use *train* for *concourse of passers by*, but for *skirts* sweeping along the floor.

In the first stanza my copy reads, second line—

> "bitter *chill* it was,"

to avoid the echo cold in the second line.

Ever yours sincerely,

JOHN KEATS.

My dear Brown,

I have only been to ——'s once since you left, when —— could not find your letters. Now this is bad of me. I should, in this instance, conquer the great aversion to breaking up my regular habits, which grows upon me more and more. True, I have an excuse in the weather, which drives one from shelter to shelter in any little excursion. I have not heard from George. My book * is coming out with very low hopes, though not spirits, on my part. This shall be my last trial; not succeeding, I shall try what I can do in the apothecary line. When you hear from or see —— it is probable you will hear some complaints against me, which this notice is not intended to forestall. The fact is, I did behave badly; but it is to be attributed to my health, spirits, and the disadvantageous ground I stand on in society. I could go and accommodate matters if I were not too weary of the world. I know that they are more happy and comfortable than I am; therefore why should I trouble myself about it? I foresee I shall know very few people in the course of a year or two. Men get such different habits that they become as oil and vinegar to one

* "Lamia, Isabella, and other Poems."

another. Thus far I have a consciousness of having been pretty dull and heavy, both in subject and phrase; I might add, enigmatical. I am in the wrong, and the world is in the right, I have no doubt. Fact is, I have had so many kindnesses done me by so many people, that I am cheveaux-de-frised with benefits, which I must jump over or break down. I met —— in town, a few days ago, who invited me to supper to meet Wordsworth, Southey, Lamb, Haydon, and some more; I was too careful of my health to risk being out at night. Talking of that, I continue to improve slowly, but, I think, surely. There is a famous exhibition in Pall-Mall of the old English portraits by Vandyck and Holbein, Sir Peter Lely, and the great Sir Godfrey. Pleasant countenances predominate; so I will mention two or three unpleasant ones. There is James the First, whose appearance would disgrace a "Society for the Suppression of Women;" so very squalid and subdued to nothing he looks. Then, there is old Lord Burleigh, the high-priest of economy, the political save-all, who has the appearance of a Pharisee just rebuffed by a Gospel *bon-mot*. Then, there is George the Second, very like an unintellectual Voltaire, troubled with the gout and a bad temper. Then, there is young Devereux, the favourite, with every appearance of as slang a boxer as any in the

Court; his face is cast in the mould of blackguardism with jockey-plaster. I shall soon begin upon "Lucy Vaughan Lloyd." I do not begin composition yet, being willing, in case of a relapse, to have nothing to reproach myself with. I hope the weather will give you the slip; let it show itself and steal out of your company. When I have sent off this, I shall write another to some place about fifty miles in advance of you.

Good morning to you.

Yours ever sincerely,

JOHN KEATS.

MY DEAR BROWN,

You may not have heard from ——, or ——, or in any way, that an attack of spitting of blood, and all its weakening consequences, has prevented me from writing for so long a time. I have matter now for a very long letter, but not news; so I must cut everything short. I shall make some confession, which you will be the only person, for many reasons, I shall trust with. A winter in England would, I have not a doubt, kill me; so I have resolved to go to Italy, either by sea or land. Not that I have any great hopes of that, for, I think, there is a core of disease in me not easy to pull out

I shall be obliged to set off in less than a month. Do not, my dear Brown, tease yourself about me. You must fill up your time as well as you can, and as happily. You must think of my faults as lightly as you can. When I have health I will bring up the long arrears of letters I owe you. My book has had good success among the literary people, and I believe has a moderate sale. I have seen very few people we know. —— has visited me more than any one. I would go to —— and make some inquiries after you, if I could with any bearable sensation; but a person I am not quite used to causes an oppression on my chest. Last week I received a letter from Shelley, at Pisa, of a very kind nature, asking me to pass the winter with him. Hunt has behaved very kindly to me. You shall hear from me again shortly.

Your affectionate friend,

JOHN KEATS.

HAMPSTEAD,
Mrs. ——'s, Wentworth Place.

MY DEAR HAYDON,

I am much better this morning than I was when I wrote you the note; that is, my hopes and spirits are better, which are generally at a very low ebb, from such a protracted illness. I shall be here for a little time, and at home all every day. A journey to Italy is recommended me, which I have

resolved upon, and am beginning to prepare for. Hoping to see you shortly,

I remain your affectionate friend,

JOHN KEATS.

Mr. Haydon has recorded in his journal the terrible impression of this visit: the very colouring of the scene struck forcibly on the painter's imagination; the white curtains, the white sheets, the white shirt, and the white skin of his friend, all contrasted with the bright hectic flush on his cheek and heightened the sinister effect: he went away hardly hoping.

WENTWORTH PLACE,
[14*th August*, 1820.]

MY DEAR TAYLOR,

My chest is in such a nervous state, that anything extra, such as speaking to an unaccustomed person, or writing a note, half suffocates me. This journey to Italy wakes me at daylight every morning, and haunts me horribly. I shall endeavour to go, though it be with the sensation of marching up against a battery. The first step towards it is to know the expense of a journey and a year's residence, which if you will ascertain for me, and let me know early, you will greatly serve me. I have more to say, but must desist, for every line I write increases

the tightness of my chest, and I have many more to do. I am convinced that this sort of thing does not continue for nothing. If you can come, with any of our friends, do.

Your sincere friend,
JOHN KEATS.

MY DEAR BROWN,

I ought to be off at the end of this week, as the cold winds begin to blow towards evening;—but I will wait till I have your answer to this. I am to be introduced, before I set out, to a Dr. Clark, a physician settled at Rome, who promises to befriend me in every way there. The sale of my book is very slow, though it has been very highly rated. One of the causes, I understand from different quarters, of the unpopularity of this new book, is the offence the ladies take at me. On thinking that matter over, I am certain that I have said nothing in a spirit to displease any woman I would care to please; but still there is a tendency to class women in my books with roses and sweetmeats,—they never see themselves dominant. I will say no more, but, waiting in anxiety for your answer, doff my hat, and make a purse as long as I can.

Your affectionate friend,
JOHN KEATS.

The acquaintance between Keats and Mr. Severn the artist had begun about the end of 1817, and a similarity of general tastes soon led to a most agreeable interchange of their reciprocal abilities. To Severn the poetical faculty of Keats was an ever-flowing source of enjoyment and inspiration—to Keats the double talent of Severn for painting and music imparted the principles and mechanical processes of Art. Keats himself had a taste for painting that might have been cultivated into skill, and he could produce a pleasing musical effect, though possessing hardly any voice. He would sit by for hours while Severn was playing, following the air with a low kind of recitative. "I delight in Haydn's symphonies," he one day said, "he is like a child, there 's no knowing what he will do next." "Shakspeare's Songs," such as

"Full fathom five thy father lies,"

and

"The rain it raineth every day,"

set to music by Purcell, were great favourites with him.

Mr. Severn had had the gratification, from the commencement of their acquaintance, of bringing Keats into communion with the great masters of painting. A notable instance of the impression made on that susceptible nature by those achievements is manifest as early as the Hymn in the fourth book of

the "Endymion," which is, in fact, the "Bacchus and Ariadne" of Titian, now in our National Gallery, translated into verse. Take these images as examples:

"And as I sat, over the light blue hills
There came a noise of revellers; the rills
Into the wide stream came of purple hue—
'Twas Bacchus and his crew!
The earnest trumpet spake, and silver thrills
From kissing cymbals made a merry din—
'Twas Bacchus and his kin!
Like to a moving vintage down they came,
Crowned with green leaves, and faces all on flame.
* * * *
"Within his car, aloft, young Bacchus stood,
Trifling his ivy-dart, in dancing mood,
With sidelong laughing;
And near him rode Silenus on his ass,
Pelted with flowers as he on did pass
Tipsily quaffing.
* * * *
Mounted on panthers' furs and lions' manes,
From rear to van they scour about the plains;
A three-days' journey in a moment done;
And always, at the rising of the sun,
About the wilds they hunt with spear and horn,
On spleenful unicorn."

At the period occupied by this narrative, the gold medal to be adjudged by the Royal Academy for the best historical painting had not been given for the last twelve years, no work having been produced which the judges regarded as deserving so high an

acknowledgment of merit. When therefore it was given to Mr. Severn for his painting of Spenser's "Cave of Despair" there burst out a chorus of long-hoarded discontents, which fell severely on the successful candidate. Severn had long worked at the picture in secret—Keats watching its progress with the greatest interest. I have already mentioned one instance in which the poet passionately defended his friend when attacked, and now the time was come when that and similar proofs of attachment were to receive abundant compensation. Entirely regardless of his future prospects, and ready to abandon all the advantages of the position he had won, Mr. Severn at once offered to accompany Keats to Italy. For the change of climate now remained the only chance of prolonging a life so dear both to genius and to friendship, and a long and lonely voyage, and solitary transportation to a foreign land, must, with such a sympathetic and affectionate nature, neutralise all outward advantages, to say nothing of the miserable condition in which he would be reduced in case the disease did not give way to the alteration of scene and temperature. Such a companionship, therefore, as this which was proposed, was everything to him, and though he reproached himself on his death-bed with permitting Severn to make the sacrifice, it no doubt afforded all the alleviation of which his sad condition was capable.

During a pedestrian tour, occasional delays in the delivery of letters are inevitable. Thus Mr. Brown walked on disappointed from one post-office to another, till, on the ninth of September, he received at Dunkeld the above alarming intelligence. He lost no time in embarking at Dundee, and arrived in London only one day too late. Unknown to each, the vessels containing these two anxious friends lay a whole night side by side at Gravesend, and by an additional irony of fate, when Keats's ship was driven back into Portsmouth by stress of weather, Mr. Brown was staying in the neighbourhood within ten miles, when Keats landed and spent a day on shore. Nothing was left to him but to make his preparations for following Keats as speedily as possible, and remaining with him in Italy, if it turned out that a southern climate was necessary for the preservation of his life.

The voyage began under tolerably prosperous auspices. "Keats," wrote Mr. Severn on the 20th of September, "looks very happy; for myself, I would not change with any one." One of his companions in the vessel was a young lady afflicted with the same malady as himself, and whose illness often diverted his thoughts from his own. Yet there are in the following letter deep tones of moral and physical suffering, which perhaps only found utterance in

communion with the friend from whom he was almost conscious he was parting for ever. He landed once more in England, on the Dorchester coast, after a weary fortnight spent in beating about the Channel: the bright beauty of the day and the scene revived for a moment the poet's drooping heart, and the inspiration remained on him for some time even after his return to the ship. It was then that he composed that Sonnet of solemn tenderness—

"Bright star! would I were stedfast as thou art," &c.*

and wrote it out in a copy of Shakspeare's Poems he had given to Severn a few days before. I know of nothing written afterwards.

MARIA CROWTHER,
Off Yarmouth, Isle of Wight, Sept. 28, 1820.

MY DEAR BROWN,

The time has not yet come for a pleasant letter from me. I have delayed writing to you from time to time, because I felt how impossible it was to enliven you with one heartening hope of my recovery. This morning in bed the matter struck me in a different manner; I thought I would write "while I was in some liking," or I might become too ill to write at all; and then, if the desire to have written

* See the "Literary Remains."

should become strong, it would be a great affliction to me. I have many more letters to write, and I bless my stars that I have begun, for time seems to press. This may be my best opportunity. We are in a calm, and I am easy enough this morning. If my spirits seem too low you may in some degree impute it to our having been at sea a fortnight without making any way. I was very disappointed at Bedhampton, and was much provoked at the thought of your being at Chichester to-day. I should have delighted in setting off for London for the sensation merely, for what should I do there? I could not leave my lungs or stomach, or other worse things behind me. I wish to write on subjects that will not agitate me much. There is one I must mention and have done with it. Even if my body would recover of itself, this would prevent it. The very thing which I want to live most for will be a great occasion of my death. I cannot help it. Who can help it? Were I in health it would make me ill, and how can I bear it in my state? I dare say you will be able to guess on what subject I am harping—you know what was my greatest pain during the first part of my illness at your house. I wish for death every day and night to deliver me from these pains, and then I wish death away, for death would destroy even those pains, which are better than nothing.

Land and sea, weakness and decline, are great separators, but Death is the great divorcer for ever. When the pang of this thought has passed through my mind, I may say the bitterness of death is passed. I often wish for you, that you might flatter me with the best. I think, without my mentioning it, for my sake, you would be a friend to Miss —— when I am dead. You think she has many faults, but for my sake think she has not one. If there is anything you can do for her by word or deed I know you will do it. I am in a state at present in which woman, merely as woman, can have no more power over me than stocks and stones, and yet the difference of my sensations with respect to Miss —— and my sister is amazing—the one seems to absorb the other to a degree incredible. I seldom think of my brother and sister in America; the thought of leaving Miss —— is beyond everything horrible—the sense of darkness coming over me—I eternally see her figure eternally vanishing; some of the phrases she was in the habit of using during my last nursing at Wentworth Place ring in my ears. Is there another life? Shall I awake and find all this a dream? There must be, we cannot be created for this sort of suffering. The receiving this letter is to be one of yours—I will say nothing about our friendship, or rather yours to me, more than that, as you deserve

to escape, you will never be so unhappy as I am. I should think of you in my last moments. I shall endeavour to write to Miss ——, if possible, to-day. A sudden stop to my life in the middle of one of these letters would be no bad thing, for it keeps one in a sort of fever awhile; though fatigued with a letter longer than any I have written for a long while, it would be better to go on for ever than awake to a sense of contrary winds. We expect to put into Portland Roads to-night. The captain, the crew, and the passengers, are all ill-tempered and weary. I shall write to Dilke. I feel as if I was closing my last letter to you, my dear Brown.

Your affectionate friend,

JOHN KEATS.

A violent storm in the Bay of Biscay lasted for thirty hours, and exposed the voyagers to considerable danger. "What awful music!" cried Severn, as the waves raged against the vessel. "Yes," said Keats, as a sudden lurch inundated the cabin, "Water parted from the sea." After the tempest had subsided, Keats was reading the description of the storm in "Don Juan," and cast the book on the floor in a transport of indignation. "How horrible an example of human nature," he cried, "is this man,

who has no pleasure left him but to gloat over and jeer at the most awful incidents of life. Oh! this is a paltry originality, which consists in making solemn things gay, and gay things solemn, and yet it will fascinate thousands, by the very diabolical outrage of their sympathies. Byron's perverted education makes him assume to feel, and try to impart to others, those depraved sensations which the want of any education excites in many."

The invalid's sufferings increased during the latter part of the voyage and a ten-days' miserable quarantine at Naples. But, when once fairly landed and in comfortable quarters, his spirits appeared somewhat to revive, and the glorious scenery to bring back, at moments, his old sense of delight. But these transitory gleams, which the hopeful heart of Severn caught and stored up, were in truth only remarkable as contrasted with the chronic gloom that overcame all things, even his love. What other words can tell the story like his own? What fiction could colour more deeply this picture of all that is most precious in existence becoming most painful and destructive? What profounder pathos can the world of tragedy exhibit than this expression of all that is good and great in nature writhing impotent in the grasp of an implacable destiny?

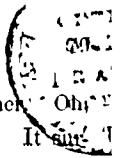
NAPLES,
Nov. 1. [1820.]

MY DEAR BROWN,

Yesterday we were let out of quarantine, during which my health suffered more from bad air and the stifled cabin than it had done the whole voyage. The fresh air revived me a little, and I hope I am well enough this morning to write to you a short calm letter;—if that can be called one, in which I am afraid to speak of what I would fainest dwell upon. As I have gone thus far into it, I must go on a little;—perhaps it may relieve the load of *wretchedness* which presses upon me. The persuasion that I shall see her no more will kill me. My dear Brown, I should have had her when I was in health, and I should have remained well. I can bear to die—I cannot bear to leave her. Oh, God! God! God! Everything I have in my trunks that reminds me of her goes through me like a spear. The silk lining she put in my travelling cap scalds my head. My imagination is horribly vivid about her—I see her—I hear her. There is nothing in the world of sufficient interest to divert me from her a moment. This was the case when I was in England; I cannot recollect, without shuddering, the time that I was a prisoner at Hunt's, and used to keep my eyes fixed on Hampstead all day. Then there was a good

hope of seeing her again—Now!—O that I could be buried near where she lives! I am afraid to write to her—to receive a letter from her—to see her handwriting would break my heart—even to hear of her anyhow, to see her name written, would be more than I can bear. My dear Brown, what am I to do? Where can I look for consolation or ease? If I had any chance of recovery, this passion would kill me. Indeed, through the whole of my illness, both at your house and at Kentish Town, this fever has never ceased wearing me out. When you write to me, which you will do immediately, write to Rome (*poste restante*)—if she is well and happy, put a mark thus +; if——

Remember me to all. I will endeavour to bear my miseries patiently. A person in my state of health should not have such miseries to bear. Write a short note to my sister, saying you have heard from me. Severn is very well. If I were in better health I would urge your coming to Rome. I fear there is no one can give me any comfort. Is there any news of George? O, that something fortunate had ever happened to me or my brothers!—then I might hope,—but despair is forced upon me as a habit. My dear Brown, for my sake, be her advocate for ever. I cannot say a word about Naples; I do not feel at all concerned in the thousand novelties around me. I am afraid to write to her. I should



like her to know that I do not forget her. Oh, Brown, I have coals of fire in my breast. It surprises me that the human heart is capable of containing and bearing so much misery. Was I born for this end? God bless her, and her mother, and my sister, and George, and his wife, and you, and all!

Your ever affectionate friend,

JOHN KEATS.

Thursday.—I was a day too early for the Courier. He sets out now. I have been more calm to-day, though in a half dread of not continuing so. I said nothing of my health; I know nothing of it; you will hear Severn's account, from ——. I must leave off. You bring my thoughts too near to ——. God bless you!

Little things, that at other times might have been well passed over, now struck his susceptible imagination with intense disgust. He could not bear to go to the opera, on account of the sentinels who stood constantly on the stage, and whom he at first took for parts of the scenic effect. "We will go at once to Rome," he said; "I know my end approaches, and the continual visible tyranny of this government prevents me from having any peace of mind. I could

not lie quietly here. I will not leave even my bones in the midst of this despotism."

He had received at Naples a most kind letter from Mr. Shelley, anxiously inquiring about his health, offering him advice as to the adaptation of diet to the climate, and concluding with an urgent invitation to Pisa, where he could ensure him every comfort and attention. But for one circumstance, it is unfortunate that this offer was not accepted, as it might have spared at least some annoyances to the sufferer, and much painful responsibility, extreme anxiety, and unrelieved distress to his friend.

On arriving at Rome, he delivered the letter of introduction already mentioned, to Dr. (now Sir James) Clark, at that time rising into high repute as a physician. The circumstances of the young patient were such as to ensure compassion from any person of feeling, and perhaps sympathy and attention from superior minds. But the attention he here received was that of all the skill and knowledge that science could confer, and the sympathy was of the kind which discharges the weight of obligation for gratuitous service, and substitutes affection for benevolence and gratitude. All that wise solicitude and delicate thoughtfulness could do to light up the dark passages of mortal sickness and soothe the pillow of the forlorn stranger was done, and, if that was little, the effort was not the less. In the history

of most professional men this incident might be remarkable, but it is an ordinary sample of the daily life of this distinguished physician, who seems to have felt it a moral duty to make his own scientific eminence the measure of his devotion to the relief and solace of all men of intellectual pursuits, and to have applied his beneficence the most effectually to those whose nervous susceptibility renders them the least fit to endure that physical suffering to which, above all men, they are constantly exposed.

The only other introduction Keats had with him, was from Sir T. Lawrence to Canova, but the time was gone by when even Art could please, and his shattered nerves refused to convey to his intelligence the impressions by which a few months before he would have been rapt into ecstacy. Dr. Clark procured Keats a lodging in the Piazza di Spagna, opposite to his own abode; it was in the first house on your right hand as you ascend the steps of the "Trinità del Monte." Rome, at that time, was far from affording the comforts to the stranger that are now so abundant, and the violent Italian superstitions respecting the infection of all dangerous disease, rendered the circumstances of an invalid most harassing and painful. Suspicion tracked him as he grew worse, and countenances darkened round as the world narrowed about him; ill-will increased just when sympathy was most

wanted, and the essential loneliness of the death-bed was increased by the alienation of all other men; the last grasp of the swimmer for life was ruthlessly cast off by his stronger comrade, and the affections that are wont to survive the body were crushed down in one common dissolution. At least from this desolation Keats was saved by the love and care of Mr. Severn and Dr. Clark.

I have now to give the last letter of Keats in my possession; probably the last he wrote. One phrase in the commencement of it became frequent with him; he would continually ask Dr. Clark, "When will this posthumous life of mine come to an end?" Yet when this was written, hope was evidently not extinguished within him, and it does appear not unlikely that if the soothing influences of climate had been sooner brought to bear on his constitution, and his nervous irritability from other causes been diminished, his life might have been saved, or at least, considerably prolonged.

Rome,
30*th November*, 1820.

My dear Brown,

'Tis the most difficult thing in the world to me to write a letter. My stomach continues so bad, that I feel it worse on opening any book,—yet

I am much better than I was in quarantine. Then I am afraid to encounter the pro-ing and con-ing of anything interesting to me in England. I have an habitual feeling of my real life having passed, and that I am leading a posthumous existence. God knows how it would have been—but it appears to me—however, I will not speak of that subject. I must have been at Bedhampton nearly at the time you were writing to me from Chichester—how unfortunate—and to pass on the river too! There was my star predominant! I cannot answer anything in your letter, which followed me from Naples to Rome, because I am afraid to look it over again. I am so weak (in mind) that I cannot bear the sight of any handwriting of a friend I love so much as I do you. Yet I ride the little horse, and, at my worst, even in quarantine, summoned up more puns, in a sort of desperation, in one week than in any year of my life. There is one thought enough to kill me; I have been well, healthy, alert, &c., walking with her, and now—the knowledge of contrast, feeling for light and shade, all that information (primitive sense) necessary for a poem, are great enemies to the recovery of the stomach. There, you rogue, I put you to the torture; but you must bring your philosophy to bear, as I do mine, really, or how should I be able to live? Dr. Clark is

very attentive to me; he says, there is very little the matter with my lungs, but my stomach, he says, is very bad. I am well disappointed in hearing good news from George, for it runs in my head we shall all die young. I have not written to Reynolds yet, which he must think very neglectful; being anxious to send him a good account of my health, I have delayed it from week to week. If I recover, I will do all in my power to correct the mistakes made during sickness; and if I should not, all my faults will be forgiven. Severn is very well, though he leads so dull a life with me. Remember me to all friends, and tell Haslam I should not have left London without taking leave of him, but from being so low in body and mind. Write to George as soon as you receive this, and tell him how I am, as far as you can guess; and also a note to my sister—who walks about my imagination like a ghost—she is so like Tom. I can scarcely bid you good-bye, even in a letter. I always made an awkward bow.

God bless you!

JOHN KEATS.

After such words as these, the comments or the description of any mere biographer must indeed jar upon every mind duly impressed with the reality of this sad history. The voice, which we have followed

so long in all its varying, yet ever-true, modulations of mirth and melancholy, of wonder and of wit, of activity and anguish, and which has conferred on these volumes whatever value they may possess, is now silent, and will not be heard on earth again. The earnest utterances of the devoted friend, who transmitted to other listening affections the details of those weary hours, and who followed to the very last the ebb and flow of that wave of fickle life, remain the fittest substitute for those sincere revelations which can come to us no more. It is left to passages from the letters of Mr. Severn to express in their energetic simplicity the final accidents of the hard catastrophe of so much that only asked for healthy life to be fruitful, useful, powerful, and happy. Mr. Severn wrote from Rome:—

"*Dec. 14th.*—I fear poor Keats is at his worst. A most unlooked-for relapse has confined him to his bed with every chance against him. It has been so sudden upon what I thought convalescence, and without any seeming cause, that I cannot calculate on the next change. I dread it, for his suffering is so great, so continued, and his fortitude so completely gone, that any further change must make him delirious. This is the fifth day, and I see him get worse.

"*Dec. 17th*, 4 A.M.—Not a moment can I be from

him. I sit by his bed and read all day, and at night I humour him in all his wanderings. He has just fallen asleep, the first sleep for eight nights, and now from mere exhaustion. I hope he will not wake till I have written, for I am anxious you should know the truth; yet I dare not let him see I think his state dangerous. On the morning of this attack he was going on in good spirits, quite merrily, when, in an instant, a cough seized him, and he vomited two cupfulls of blood. In a moment I got Dr. Clark, who took eight ounces of blood from his arm—it was black and thick. Keats was much alarmed and dejected. What a sorrowful day I had with him! He rushed out of bed and said, 'This day shall be my last;' and but for me most certainly it would. The blood broke forth in similar quantity the next morning, and he was bled again. I was afterwards so fortunate as to talk him into a little calmness, and he soon became quite patient. Now the blood has come up in coughing five times. Not a single thing will he digest, yet he keeps on craving for food. Every day he raves he will die from hunger, and I've been obliged to give him more than was allowed. His imagination and memory present every thought to him in horror; the recollection of 'his good friend Brown,' of 'his four happy weeks spent under *her* care,' of his sister and brother. O! he will mourn

over all to me whilst I cool his burning forehead, till I tremble for his intellects. How can he be 'Keats' again after all this? Yet I may see it too gloomily, since each coming night I sit up adds its dismal contents to my mind.

"Dr. Clark will not say much; although there are no bounds to his attention, yet he can with little success 'administer to a mind diseased.' All that can be done he does most kindly, while his lady, like himself in refined feeling, prepares all that poor Keats takes, for in this wilderness of a place, for an invalid, there was no alternative. Yesterday Dr. Clark went all over Rome for a certain kind of fish, and just as I received it carefully dressed, Keats was taken with spitting of blood. We have the best opinion of Dr. Clark's skill: he comes over four or five times a-day, and he has left word for us to call him up, at any moment, in case of danger. My spirits have been quite pulled down. These wretched Romans have no idea of comfort. I am obliged to do everything for him. I wish you were here.

"I have just looked at him. This will be a good night.

"*Jan. 15th*, 1821, *half-past Eleven*.—Poor Keats has just fallen asleep. I have watched him and read to him to his very last wink; he has been saying to me —'Severn, I can see under your quiet look immense

contention—you don't know what you are reading. You are enduring for me more than I would have you. O! that my last hour was come!' He is sinking daily; perhaps another three weeks may lose him to me for ever! I made sure of his recovery when we set out. I was selfish: I thought of his value to me; I made my own public success to depend on his candour to me.

"Torlonia, the banker, has refused us any more money; the bill is returned unaccepted, and to-morrow I must pay my last crown for this cursed lodging-place: and what is more, if he dies, all the beds and furniture will be burnt and the walls scraped, and they will come on me for a hundred pounds or more! But, above all, this noble fellow lying on the bed and without the common spiritual comforts that many a rogue and fool has in his last moments! If I do break down it will be under this; but I pray that some angel of goodness may yet lead him through this dark wilderness.

"If I could leave Keats every day for a time I could soon raise money by my painting, but he will not let me out of his sight, he will not bear the face of a stranger. I would rather cut my tongue out than tell him I must get the money—that would kill him at a word. You see my hopes of being kept by the Royal Academy will be cut off, unless I send a picture by the spring.

I have written to Sir T. Lawrence. I have got a volume of Jeremy Taylor's works, which Keats has heard me read to-night. This is a treasure indeed, and came when I should have thought it hopeless. Why may not other good things come? I will keep myself up with such hopes. Dr. Clark is still the same, though he knows about the bill: he is afraid the next change will be to diarrhœa. Keats sees all this—his knowledge of anatomy makes every change tenfold worse: every way he is unfortunate, yet every one offers me assistance on his account. He cannot read any letters, he has made me put them by him unopened. They tear him to pieces—he dare not look on the outside of any more: make this known.

"*Feb.* 18*th.*—I have just got your letter of Jan. 15th. The contrast of your quiet friendly Hampstead with this lonely place and our poor suffering Keats, brings the tears into my eyes. I wish many many times that he had never left you. His recovery would have been impossible in England; but his excessive grief has made it equally so. In your care he seemed to me like an infant in its mother's arms; you would have smoothed down his pain by variety of interests, and his death would have been eased by the presence of many friends. Here, with one solitary friend, in a place savage for an invalid, he has one more pang added to his many—for I

have had the hardest task in keeping from him my painful situation. I have kept him alive week after week He has refused all food, and I have prepared his meals six times a day, till he had no excuse left. I have only dared to leave him while he slept. It is impossible to conceive what his sufferings have been: he might, in his anguish, have plunged into the grave in secret, and not a syllable been known about him: this reflection alone repays me for all I have done. Now, he is still alive and calm. He would not hear that he was better: the thought of recovery is beyond everything dreadful to him; we now dare not perceive any improvement, for the hope of death seems his only comfort. He talks of the quiet grave as the first rest he can ever have.

"In the last week a great desire for books came across his mind. I got him all I could, and three days this charm lasted, but now it has gone. Yet he is very tranquil. He is more and more reconciled to his horrible misfortunes.

"*Feb. 14th.*—Little or no change has taken place, except this beautiful one, that his mind is growing to great quietness and peace. I find this change has to do with the increasing weakness of his body, but to me it seems like a delightful sleep: I have been beating about in the tempest of his mind so long. To-night he has talked very much, but so easily, that

he fell at last into a pleasant sleep. He seems to have happy dreams. This will bring on some change,—it cannot be worse—it may be better. Among the many things he has requested of me to-night, this is the principal—that on his grave-stone shall be this inscription:—

'HERE LIES ONE WHOSE NAME WAS WRIT IN WATER.'

You will understand this so well that I need not say a word about it.

"When he first came here he purchased a copy of 'Alfieri,' but put it down at the second page—being much affected at the lines

'Misera me! sollievo a me non resta,
Altro che il pianto, *ed il pianto è delitto!*'

Now that I know so much of his grief, I do not wonder at it.

"Such a letter has come! I gave it to Keats supposing it to be one of yours, but it proved sadly otherwise. The glance at that letter tore him to pieces; the effects were on him for many days. He did not read it—he could not—but requested me to place it in his coffin, together with a purse and a letter (unopened) of his sister's;* since then he has

* Miss Keats shortly after married Señor Llanos, a Spanish gentleman of liberal politics and much accomplishment, the author of "Don Esteban," "Sandoval the Freemason," and other spirited illustrations of the modern history of the Peninsula.

told me *not* to place that letter in his coffin, only his sister's purse and letter, and some hair. I however persuaded him to think otherwise on this point. In his most irritable state he sees a friendless world about him, with everything that his life presents, and especially the kindness of others, tending to his melancholy death.

"I have got an English nurse to come two hours every other day, so that I am quite recovering my health. Keats seems to like her, but she has been taken ill to-day and cannot come. In a little back-room I get chalking out a picture; this, with swallowing a little Italian every day, helps to keep me up. The Doctor is delighted with your kindness to Keats;* he thinks him worse; his lungs are in a dreadful state; his stomach has lost all its power. Keats knew from the first little drop of blood that he must die; no common chance of living was left him.

"*Feb.* 22*nd.*—O! how anxious I am to hear from you! [Mr. Haslam.] I have nothing to break this dreadful solitude but letters. Day after day, night after night, here I am by our poor dying friend. My spirits, my intellect, and my health are breaking down. I can get no one to change with me—no one

* Probably alluding to pecuniary assistance afforded by Mr. Brown. But before this the friends were helped out of their immediate difficulty by the generosity of Mr. Taylor.

to relieve me. All run away, and even if they did not, Keats would not do without me.

"Last night I thought he was going; I could hear the phlegm in his throat; he bade me lift him up in the bed or he would die with pain. I watched him all night, expecting him to be suffocated at every cough. This morning, by the pale daylight, the change in him frightened me: he has sunk in the last three days to a most ghastly look. Though Dr. Clark has prepared me for the worst, I shall be ill able to bear it. I cannot bear to be set free even from this my horrible situation by the loss of him.

"I am still quite precluded from painting: which may be of consequence to me. Poor Keats has me ever by him, and shadows out the form of one solitary friend: he opens his eyes in great doubt and horror, but when they fall upon me, they close gently, open quietly and close again, till he sinks to sleep. This thought alone would keep me by him till he dies: and why did I say I was losing my time? The advantages I have gained by knowing John Keats are double and treble any I could have won by any other occupation. Farewell.

"*Feb. 27th.*—He is gone; he died with the most perfect ease—he seemed to go to sleep. On the twenty-third, about four, the approaches of death came on. 'Severn—I—lift me up—I am dying—I shall die

easy; don't be frightened—be firm, and thank God it has come.' I lifted him up in my arms. The phlegm seemed boiling in his throat, and increased until eleven, when he gradually sunk into death, so quiet, that I still thought he slept. I cannot say more now. I am broken down by four nights' watching, no sleep since, and my poor Keats gone. Three days since the body was opened: the lungs were completely gone. The doctors could not imagine how he had lived these two months. I followed his dear body to the grave on Monday, with many English. They take much care of me here—I must else have gone into a fever. I am better now, but still quite disabled.

"The police have been. The furniture, the walls, the floor, must all be destroyed and changed, but this is well looked to by Dr. Clark.

"The letters I placed in the coffin with my own hand.

"This goes by the first post. Some of my kind friends would else have written before."

After the death of Keats Mr. Severn received the following letter from Mr. Leigh Hunt, in the belief that he was still alive, and that it might be communicated to him. But even while these warm words

were being written in his own old home, he had already been committed to that distant grave, which has now become a place of pilgrimage to those fellow-countrymen who then knew not what they had lost, and who are ready, too late, to lavish on his name the love and admiration that might once have been very welcome.

VALE OF HEALTH, HAMPSTEAD,
March 3, 1821.

DEAR SEVERN,

You have concluded, of course, that I have sent no letters to Rome, because I was aware of the effect they would have on Keats's mind; and this is the principal cause,—for besides what I have been told of his emotions about letters in Italy, I remember his telling me on one occasion, that, in his sick moments, he never wished to receive another letter, or ever to see another face however friendly. But still I should have written to *you* had I not been almost at death's-door myself. You will imagine how ill I have been when you hear that I have but just begun writing again for the "Examiner" and "Indicator," after an interval of several months, during which my flesh wasted from me in sickness and melancholy. Judge how often I thought of Keats, and with what feelings. Mr. Brown tells me he is comparatively calm now, or rather quite so. If he can bear to hear

of us, pray tell him—but he knows it all already, and can put it in better language than any man. I hear he does not like to be told that he may get better; nor is it to be wondered at, considering his firm persuasion that he shall not recover. He can only regard it as a puerile thing, and an insinuation that he cannot bear to think he shall die. But if this persuasion should happen no longer to be so strong upon him, or if he can now put up with such attempts to console him, remind him of what I have said a thousand times, and that I still (upon my honour, Severn,) think always, that I have seen too many instances of recovery from apparently desperate cases of consumption, not to indulge in hope to the very last. If he cannot bear this, tell him—tell that great poet and noble-hearted man—that we shall all bear his memory in the most precious part of our hearts, and that the world shall bow their heads to it, as our loves do. Or if this again will trouble his spirit, tell him we shall never cease to remember and love him, and, that the most sceptical of us has faith enough in the high things that nature puts into our heads, to think that all who are of one accord in mind and heart, are journeying to one and the same place, and shall unite somehow or other again, face to face, mutually conscious, mutually delighted. Tell him he is only before us on the road, as he was in everything

else; or, whether you tell him the latter or no, tell him the former, and add that we shall never forget he was so, and that we are coming after him. The tears are again in my eyes, and I must not afford to shed them. The next letter I write shall be more to yourself, and a little more refreshing to your spirits, which we are very sensible must have been greatly taxed. But whether our friend dies or not, it will not be among the least lofty of our recollections by-and-by, that you helped to smooth the sick-bed of so fine a being.

God bless you, dear Severn.

Your sincere friend,

LEIGH HUNT.

Keats was buried in the Protestant cemetery at Rome, one of the most beautiful spots on which the eye and heart of man can rest. It is a grassy slope, amid verdurous ruins of the Honorian walls of the diminished city, and surmounted by the pyramidal tomb which Petrarch attributed to Remus, but which antiquarian truth has ascribed to the humbler name of Caius Cestius, a Tribune of the people, only remembered by his sepulchre. In one of those mental voyages into the past, which often precede death, Keats had told Severn that "he thought the intensest pleasure he had received in life was in watching the

growth of flowers;" and another time, after lying a while still and peaceful, he said, "I feel the flowers growing over me." And there they do grow, even all the winter long—violets and daisies mingling with the fresh herbage, and, in the words of Shelley, "making one in love with death, to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place."

Ten weeks after the close of his holy work of friendship and charity, Mr. Severn wrote to Mr. Haslam:—"Poor Keats has now his wish—his humble wish; he is at peace in the quiet grave. I walked there a few days ago, and found the daisies had grown all over it. It is in one of the most lovely retired spots in Rome. You cannot have such a place in England. I visit it with a delicious melancholy which relieves my sadness. When I recollect for how long Keats had never been one day free from ferment and torture of mind and body, and that now he lies at rest with the flowers he so desired above him, with no sound in the air but the tinkling bells of a few simple sheep and goats, I feel indeed grateful that he is here, and remember how earnestly I prayed that his sufferings might end, and that he might be removed from a world where no one grain of comfort remained for him."

Thus too in the "Adonäis," that most successful imitation of the spirit of the Grecian elegy, devoted to

the memory of one who had restored Grecian mythology to its domain of song, this place is consecrated.

"Go thou to Rome,—at once the Paradise,
The grave, the city, and the wilderness:
And where its wrecks like shattered mountains rise,
And flowering weeds, and fragrant copses dress
The bones of Desolation's nakedness;
Pass, till the Spirit of the spot shall lead
Thy footsteps to a slope of green access,
Where, like an infant's smile, over the dead
A light of laughing flowers along the grass is spread,

"And grey walls moulder round, on which dull Time
Feeds, like slow fire upon a hoary brand;
And one keen pyramid with wedge sublime,
Pavilioning the dust of him who planned
This refuge for his memory, doth stand
Like flame transformed to marble; and beneath
A field is spread, on which a newer band
Have pitched in Heaven's smile their camp of death,
Welcoming him we lose with scarce extinguished breath.

"Here pause: these graves are all too young as yet
To have outgrown the sorrow which consigned
Its charge to each; and, if the seal is set
Here, on one fountain of a mourning mind,
Break it not thou! Too surely shalt thou find
Thine own well full, if thou returnest home,
Of tears and gall. From the world's bitter wind
Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.
What Adonais is, why fear we to become?"

And a few years after this was written, in the extended burying-ground, a little above the grave of

Keats, was placed another tomb-stone, recording that below rested the passionate and world-worn heart of Shelley himself—" Cor Cordium."*

Immediately on hearing of Keats's death, Shelley expressed the profoundest sympathy and a fierce indignation against those whom he believed to have hastened it: in a few months he produced the incomparable tribute of genius to genius, which is of itself the complement of and the apology for these volumes.

The first copy of the " Adonäis " (printed at Pisa) was sent with the following letter to Mr. Severn, then enjoying the travelling pension of the Royal Academy, which had not been granted to any student for a considerable period. He resided for many years at Rome, illustrating the City and Campagna by his artistic fancy, and delighting all travellers who had the pleasure of his acquaintance by his talents and his worth. Nor was the self-devotion of his youth without its fruits in the estimation and respect of those who learned the circumstances of his visit to Italy, and above all, of those who loved the genius, revered the memory, and mourned the destiny of Keats.

* The Inscription.

PISA,
Nov. 29th, 1821.

DEAR SIR,

I send you the elegy on poor Keats—and I wish it were better worth your acceptance. You will see, by the preface, that it was written before I could obtain any particular account of his last moments; all that I still know, was communicated to me by a friend who had derived his information from Colonel Finch; I have ventured to express, as I felt, the respect and admiration which *your* conduct towards him demands.

In spite of his transcendent genius, Keats never was, nor ever will be, a popular poet; and the total neglect and obscurity in which the astonishing remnants of his mind still lie, was hardly to be dissipated by a writer, who, however he may differ from Keats in more important qualities, at least resembles him in that accidental one, a want of popularity.

I have little hope, therefore, that the poem I send you will excite any attention, nor do I feel assured that a critical notice of his writings would find a single reader. But for these considerations, it had been my intention to have collected the remnants of his compositions, and to have pubished them with a Life and Criticism. Has he left any poems or writings of

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whatsoever kind, and in whose possession are they? Perhaps you would oblige me by information on this point.

Many thanks for the picture you promise me: I shall consider it among the most sacred relics of the past. For my part, I little expected, when I last saw Keats at my friend Leigh Hunt's, that I should survive him.

Should you ever pass through Pisa, I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you, and of cultivating an acquaintance into something pleasant, begun under such melancholy auspices.

Accept, my dear sir, the assurance of my highest esteem, and believe me,

Your most sincere and faithful servant,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

The last few pages have attempted to awaken a personal interest in the story of Keats almost apart from his literary character—a personal interest founded on events that might easily have occurred to a man of inferior ability, and rather affecting from their moral than intellectual bearing. But now

> "He has outsoared the shadow of our night;
> Envy and calumny, and hate and pain,
> And that unrest which men miscall delight,
> Can touch him not and torture not again;

From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure, and now can never mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown grey in vain ;
Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,
With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn : "

and, ere we close altogether these memorials of his short earthly being, let us revert to the great distinctive peculiarities which singled him out from his fellow-men and gave him his rightful place among "the inheritors of unfulfilled renown."

Let any man of literary accomplishment, though without the habit of writing poetry, or even much taste for reading it, open "Endymion" at random, (to say nothing of the later and more perfect poems,) and examine the characteristics of the page before him, and I shall be surprised if he does not feel that the whole range of literature hardly supplies a parallel phenomenon. As a psychological curiosity, perhaps Chatterton is more wonderful; but in him the immediate ability displayed is rather the full comprehension of and identification with the old model, than the effluence of creative genius. In Keats, on the contrary, the originality in the use of his scanty materials, his expansion of them to the proportions of his own imagination, and above all, his field of diction and expression extending so far beyond his knowledge of literature, is quite inexplicable by any of the

ordinary processes of mental education. If his classical learning had been deeper, his seizure of the full spirit of Grecian beauty would have been less surprising; if his English reading had been more extensive, his inexhaustible vocabulary of picturesque and mimetic words could more easily be accounted for; but here is a surgeon's apprentice, with the ordinary culture of the middle classes, rivalling in æsthetic perceptions of antique life and thought the most careful scholars of his time and country, and reproducing these impressions in a phraseology as complete and unconventional as if he had mastered the whole history and the frequent variations of the English tongue, and elaborated a mode of utterance commensurate with his vast ideas.

The artistic absence of moral purpose may offend many readers, and the just harmony of the colouring may appear to others a displeasing monotony, but I think it impossible to lay the book down without feeling that almost every line of it contains solid gold enough to be beaten out, by common literary manufacturers, into a poem of itself. Concentration of imagery, the hitting off a picture at a stroke, the clear decisive word that brings the thing before you and will not let it go, are the rarest distinctions of the early exercise of the faculties. So much more is usually known than digested by sensitive youth, so

much more felt than understood, so much more perceived than methodised, that diffusion is fairly permitted in the earlier stages of authorship, and it is held to be one of the advantages, amid some losses, of maturer intelligence, that it learns to fix and hold the beauty it apprehends, and to crystallise the dew of its morning. Such examples to the contrary, as the "Windsor Forest" of Pope, are rather scholastic exercises of men who afterwards became great, than the first-fruits of such genius, while all Keats's poems are early productions, and there is nothing beyond them but the thought of what he might have become. Truncated as is this intellectual life, it is still a substantive whole, and the complete statue, of which such a fragment is revealed to us, stands perhaps solely in the temple of the imagination. There is indeed progress, continual and visible, in the works of Keats, but it is towards his own ideal of a poet, not towards any defined and tangible model. All that we can do is to transfer that ideal to ourselves, and to believe that if Keats had lived, that is what he would have been.

Contrary to the expectation of Mr. Shelley, the appreciation of Keats by men of thought and sensibility gradually rose after his death, until he attained the place he now holds among the poets of his country. By his side too the fame of this his friend

and eulogist ascended, and now they rest together, associated in the history of the achievements of the human imagination; twin stars, very cheering to the mental mariner tost on the rough ocean of practical life and blown about by the gusts of calumny and misrepresentation, but who, remembering what they have undergone, forgets not that he also is divine.

Nor has Keats been without his direct influence on the poetical literature that succeeded him. The most noted, and perhaps the most original, of present poets, bears more analogy to him than to any other writer, and their brotherhood has been well recognised, in the words of a critic, himself a man of redundant fancy, and of the widest perception of what is true and beautiful, lately cut off from life by a destiny as mysterious as that which has been here recounted. Mr. Sterling writes:—"Lately, I have been reading again some of Alfred Tennyson's second volume, and with profound admiration of his truly lyric and idyllic genius. There seems to me to have been more epic power in Keats, that fiery beautiful meteor; but they are two most true and great poets. When we think of the amount of the recognition they have received, one may well bless God that poetry is in itself strength and joy, whether it be crowned by all mankind, or left alone in its own magic hermitage."*

* Sterling's Essays and Tales, p. clxviii.

And this is in truth the moral of the tale. In the life which here lies before us, as plainly as a child's, the action of the poetic faculty is most clearly visible: it long sustains in vigour and delight a temperament naturally melancholy, and which, under such adverse circumstances, might well have degenerated into angry discontent: it imparts a wise temper and a courageous hope to a physical constitution doomed to early decay,* and it confines within manly affections and generous passion a nature so impressible that sensual pleasures and sentimental tenderness might easily have enervated and debased it. There is no defect in the picture which the exercise of this power does not go far to remedy, and no excellence which it does not elevate and extend.

One still graver lesson remains to be noted. Let no man, who is in anything above his fellows, claim, as of right, to be valued or understood: the vulgar great are comprehended and adored, because they are in reality in the same moral plane with those who admire; but he who deserves the higher reverence must himself convert the worshipper. The pure and

* Coleridge in page 89, vol. ii., of his "Table Talk," asserts that, when Keats (whom he describes as "a loose, slack, not well-dressed youth") met him in a lane near Highgate, and they shook hands, he said to Mr. Hunt, "there is death in that hand." This was at the period when Keats first knew Mr. Hunt, and was, apparently, in perfect health.

lofty life; the generous and tender use of the rare creative faculty; the brave endurance of neglect and ridicule; the strange and cruel end of so much genius and so much virtue; these are the lessons by which the sympathies of mankind must be interested, and their faculties educated, up to the love of such a character and the comprehension of such an intelligence. Still the lovers and scholars will be few: still the rewards of fame will be scanty and ill-proportioned: no accumulation of knowledge or series of experiences can teach the meaning of genius to those who look for it in additions and results, any more than the numbers studded round a planet's orbit could approach nearer infinity than a single unit. The world of thought must remain apart from the world of action, for, if they once coincided, the problem of Life would be solved, and the hope, which we call heaven, would be realised on earth. And therefore men

> "Are cradled into poetry by wrong:
> They learn in suffering what they teach in song."

LITERARY REMAINS.

OTHO THE GREAT.

A Tragedy.

IN FIVE ACTS.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

OTHO THE GREAT, *Emperor of Germany.*
LUDOLPH, *his Son.*
CONRAD, *Duke of Franconia.*
ALBERT, *a Knight, favoured by Otho.*
SIGIFRED, *an Officer, friend of Ludolph.*
THEODORE, } *Officers.*
GONFRID, }
ETHELBERT, *an Abbot.*
GERSA, *Prince of Hungary.*
An Hungarian Captain.
Physician.
Page.
Nobles, Knights, Attendants, and Soldiers.

ERMINIA, *Niece of Otho.*
AURANTHE, *Conrad's Sister.*
Ladies and Attendants.

SCENE.—*The Castle of Friedburg, its vicinity, and the Hungarian Camp.*

TIME.—*One Day.*

OTHO THE GREAT.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in the Castle.*

Enter CONRAD.

So, I am safe emerged from these broils!
Amid the wreck of thousands I am whole;
For every crime I have a laurel-wreath,
For every lie a lordship. Nor yet has
My ship of fortune furl'd her silken sails,—
Let her glide on! This danger'd neck is saved,
By dexterous policy, from the rebel's axe;
And of my ducal palace not one stone
Is bruised by the Hungarian petards.
Toil hard, ye slaves, and from the miser-earth
Bring forth once more my bullion, treasured deep,
With all my jewell'd salvers, silver and gold,
And precious goblets that make rich the wine.
But why do I stand babbling to myself?
Where is Auranthe? I have news for her
Shall—

Enter AURANTHE.

Auranthe. Conrad! what tidings? Good, if I may guess
From your alert eyes and high-lifted brows.
What tidings of the battle? Albert? Ludolph? Otho?

Conrad. You guess aright. And, sister, slurring o'er
Our by-gone quarrels, I confess my heart
Is beating with a child's anxiety,
To make our golden fortune known to you.

Auranthe. So serious?

Conrad. Yes, so serious, that before
I utter even the shadow of a hint
Concerning what will make that sin-worn cheek
Blush joyous blood through every lineament,
You must make here a solemn vow to me.

Auranthe. I pr'ythee, Conrad, do not overact
The hypocrite. What vow would you impose?

Conrad. Trust me for once. That you may be assured
'Tis not confiding in a broken reed,
A poor court-bankrupt, outwitted and lost,
Revolve these facts in your acutest mood,
In such a mood as now you listen to me:
A few days since, I was an open rebel,—

Against the Emperor had suborn'd his son,—
Drawn off his nobles to revolt,—and shown
Contented fools causes for discontent,
Fresh hatch'd in my ambition's eagle-nest;
So thrived I as a rebel,—and, behold!
Now I am Otho's favourite, his dear friend,
His right hand, his brave Conrad!

Auranthe. I confess
You have intrigued with these unsteady times
To admiration. But to be a favourite!

Conrad. I saw my moment. The Hungarians,
Collected silently in holes and corners,
Appear'd, a sudden host, in the open day.
I should have perish'd in our empire's wreck,
But, calling interest loyalty, swore faith
To most believing Otho; and so help'd
His blood-stain'd ensigns to the victory
In yesterday's hard fight, that it has turn'd
The edge of his sharp wrath to eager kindness.

Auranthe. So far yourself. But what is this to me
More than that I am glad? I gratulate you.

Conrad. Yes, sister, but it does regard you greatly,
Nearly, momentously,—aye, painfully!
Make me this vow—

Auranthe. Concerning whom or what?

Conrad. Albert!

Auranthe. I would inquire somewhat of him:

You had a letter from me touching him?
No treason 'gainst his head in deed or word!
Surely you spared him at my earnest prayer?
Give me the letter—it should not exist!

Conrad. At one pernicious charge of the enemy,
I, for a moment-whiles, was prisoner ta'en
And rifled,—stuff! the horses' hoofs have minced it!

Auranthe. He is alive?

Conrad. He is! but here make oath
To alienate him from your scheming brain,
Divorce him from your solitary thoughts,
And cloud him in such utter banishment,
That when his person meets again your eye,
Your vision shall quite lose its memory,
And wander past him as through vacancy.

Auranthe. I 'll not be perjured.

Conrad. No, nor great, nor mighty;
You would not wear a crown, or rule a kingdom.
To you it is indifferent.

Auranthe. What means this?

Conrad. You 'll not be perjured! Go to Albert then,
That camp-mushroom—dishonour of our house.
Go, page his dusty heels upon a march,
Furbish his jingling baldric while he sleeps,
And share his mouldy ration in a siege.
Yet stay,—perhaps a charm may call you back,

And make the widening circlets of your eyes
Sparkle with healthy fevers.—The Emperor
Hath given consent that you should marry Ludolph!
Auranthe. Can it be, brother? For a golden crown
With a queen's awful lips I doubly thank you!
This is to wake in Paradise! Farewell
Thou clod of yesterday—'twas not myself!
Not till this moment did I ever feel
My spirit's faculties! I 'll flatter you
For this, and be you ever proud of it;
Thou, Jove-like, struck'dst thy forehead,
And from the teeming marrow of thy brain
I spring complete Minerva! But the prince—
His highness Ludolph—where is he?
Conrad. I know not:
When, lackeying my counsel at a beck,
The rebel lords, on bended knees, received
The Emperor's pardon, Ludolph kept aloof,
Sole, in a stiff, fool-hardy, sulky pride;
Yet, for all this, I never saw a father
In such a sickly longing for his son.
We shall soon see him, for the Emperor
He will be here this morning.
Auranthe. That I heard
Among the midnight rumours from the camp.
Conrad. You give up Albert to me?
Auranthe. Harm him not!

E'en for his highness Ludolph's sceptry hand,
I would not Albert suffer any wrong.

Conrad. Have I not laboured, plotted—?

Auranthe. See you spare him:
Nor be pathetic, my kind benefactor!
On all the many bounties of your hand,—
'Twas for yourself you laboured—not for me!
Do you not count, when I am queen, to take
Advantage of your chance discoveries
Of my poor secrets, and so hold a rod
Over my life?

Conrad. Let not this slave—this villain—
Be cause of feud between us. See! he comes!
Look, woman, look, your Albert is quite safe!
In haste it seems. Now shall I be in the way,
And wish'd with silent curses in my grave,
Or side by side with 'whelmed mariners.

Enter ALBERT.

Albert. Fair on your graces fall this early morrow!
So it is like to do, without my prayers,
For your right noble names, like favorite tunes,
Have fallen full frequent from our Emperor's lips,
High commented with smiles.

Auranthe. Noble Albert!

Conrad (*aside*). Noble!

Auranthe. Such salutation argues a glad heart

In our prosperity. We thank you, sir.

Albert. Lady!

O, would to Heaven your poor servant
Could do you better service than mere words!
But I have other greeting than mine own,
From no less man than Otho, who has sent
This ring as pledge of dearest amity;
Tis chosen I hear from Hymen's jewel'ry,
And you will prize it, lady, I doubt not,
Beyond all pleasures past, and all to come.
To you great duke—

Conrad. To me! What of me, ha?

Albert. What pleased your grace to say?

Conrad. Your message, sir!

Albert. You mean not this to me?

Conrad. Sister, this way;
For there shall be no "gentle Alberts" now, [*Aside.*
No "sweet Auranthes!"

[*Exeunt* CONRAD *and* AURANTHE

Albert (*solus*). The duke is out of temper; if he knows
More than a brother of a sister ought,
I should not quarrel with his peevishness.
Auranthe—Heaven preserve her always fair!—
Is in the heady, proud, ambitious vein;
I bicker not with her,—bid her farewell!
She has taken flight from me, then let her soar,—

He is a fool who stands at pining gaze!
But for poor Ludolph, he is food for sorrow;
No levelling bluster of my licensed thoughts,
No military swagger of my mind,
Can smother from myself the wrong I've done him,—
Without design, indeed,—yet it is so,—
And opiate for the conscience have I none!

[*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*The Court-yard of the Castle.*

Martial Music. Enter, from the outer gate, OTHO, *Nobles, Knights, and Attendants. The Soldiers halt at the gate, with Banners in sight.*

Otho. Where is my noble Herald?

[*Enter* CONRAD, *from the Castle, attended by two Knights and Servants.* ALBERT *following.*

Well, hast told
Auranthe our intent imperial?
Lest our rent banners, too o'the sudden shown,
Should fright her silken casements, and dismay
Her household to our lack of entertainment.
A victory!

Conrad. God save illustrious Otho!

Otho. Aye, Conrad, it will pluck out all grey hairs;
It is the best physician for the spleen;

The courtliest inviter to a feast;
The subtlest excuser of small faults;
And a nice judge in the age and smack of wine.

[*Enter, from the Castle,* AURANTHE, *followed by Pages, holding up her robes, and a train of Women. She kneels.*

Hail my sweet hostess! I do thank the stars,
Or my good soldiers, or their ladies' eyes,
That, after such a merry battle fought,
I can, all safe in body and in soul,
Kiss your fair hand and lady fortune's too.
My ring! now, on my life, it doth rejoice
These lips to feel 't on this soft ivory!
Keep it, my brightest daughter; it may prove
The little prologue to a line of kings.
I strove against thee and my hot-blood son,
Dull blockhead that I was to be so blind,
But now my sight is clear; forgive me, lady.

Auranthe. My lord, I was a vassal to your frown,
And now your favour makes me but more humble;
In wintry winds the simple snow is safe,
But fadeth at the greeting of the sun:
Unto thine anger I might well have spoken,
Taking on me a woman's privilege,
But this so sudden kindness makes me dumb.

Otho. What need of this? Enough, if you will be
A potent tutoress to my wayward boy,

And teach him, what it seems his nurse could not,
To say, for once, I thank you. Sigifred!

Albert. He has not yet returned, my gracious liege.

Otho. What then! No tidings of my friendly Arab?

Conrad. None, mighty Otho.

[*To one of his Knights who goes out.*

Send forth instantly
An hundred horsemen from my honoured gates,
To scour the plains and search the cottages.
Cry a reward, to him who shall first bring
News of that vanished Arabian,
A full-heaped helmet of the purest gold.

Otho. More thanks, good Conrad; for, except my son's,
There is no face I rather would behold
Than that same quick-eyed pagan's. By the saints,
This coming night of banquets must not light
Her dazzling torches; nor the music breathe
Smooth, without clashing cymbal, tones of peace
And in-door melodies; nor the ruddy wine
Ebb spouting to the lees; if I pledge not,
In my first cup, that Arab!

Albert. Mighty Monarch,
I wonder not this stranger's victor-deeds
So hang upon your spirit. Twice in the fight
It was my chance to meet his olive brow,
Triumphant in the enemy's shatter'd rhomb;

And, to say truth, in any Christian arm
I never saw such prowess.
Otho. Did you ever?
O, 'tis a noble boy!—tut!—what do I say?
I mean a triple Saladin, whose eyes,
When in the glorious scuffle they met mine,
Seem'd to say—"Sleep, old man, in safety sleep;
I am the victory!"
Conrad. Pity he 's not here.
Otho. And my son too, pity he is not here.
Lady Auranthe I would not make you blush,
But can you give a guess where Ludolph is?
Know you not of him?
Auranthe. Indeed, my liege, no secret—
Otho. Nay, nay, without more words, dost know of him?
Auranthe. I would I were so over-fortunate,
Both for his sake and mine, and to make glad
A father's ears with tidings of his son.
Otho. I see 'tis like to be a tedious day.
Were Theodore and Gonfrid and the rest
Sent forth with my commands?
Albert. Aye, my lord.
Otho. And no news! No news! 'Faith! 'tis very strange
He thus avoids us. Lady, is 't not strange?
Will he be truant to you too? It is a shame.

Conrad. Wilt please your highness enter, and accept
The unworthy welcome of your servant's house?
Leaving your cares to one whose diligence
May in few hours make pleasures of them all.

Otho. Not so tedious, Conrad. No, no, no,—
I must see Ludolph or the—What 's that shout?

Voices without. Huzza! huzza! Long live the Emperor!

Other voices. Fall back! Away there!

Otho. Say what noise is that?

[ALBERT *advancing from the back of the Stage, whither he had hastened on hearing the cheers of the soldiery.*

Albert. It is young Gersa, the Hungarian prince,
Pick'd like a red stag from the fallow herd
Of prisoners. Poor prince, forlorn he steps,
Slow, and demure, and proud in his despair.
If I may judge by his so tragic bearing,
His eye not downcast, and his folded arm,
He doth this moment wish himself asleep
Among his fallen captains on yon plains.

Enter GERSA, *in chains, and guarded.*

Otho. Well said, Sir Albert.

Gersa. Not a word of greeting,
No welcome to a princely visitor,

Most mighty Otho? Will not my great host
Vouchsafe a syllable, before he bids
His gentlemen conduct me with all care
To some securest lodging—cold perhaps!

Otho. What mood is this? Hath fortune touch'd thy brain?

Gersa. O kings and princes of this fev'rous world,
What abject things, what mockeries must ye be,
What nerveless minions of safe palaces!
When here, a monarch, whose proud foot is used
To fallen princes' necks, as to his stirrup,
Must needs exclaim that I am mad forsooth,
Because I cannot flatter with bent knees
My conqueror!

Otho. Gersa, I think you wrong me:
I think I have a better fame abroad.

Gersa. I pr'ythee mock me not with gentle speech,
But, as a favour, bid me from thy presence;
Let me no longer be the wondering food
Of all these eyes; pr'ythee command me hence!

Otho. Do not mistake me, Gersa. That you may not,
Come, fair Auranthe, try if your soft hands
Can manage those hard rivets to set free
So brave a prince and soldier.

Auranthe (*sets him free*). Welcome task!

Gersa. I am wound up in deep astonishment!

Thank you, fair lady. Otho! emperor!
You rob me of myself; my dignity
Is now your infant; I am a weak child.
Otho. Give me your hand, and let this kindly grasp
Live in our memories.
Gersa. In mine it will.
I blush to think of my unchasten'd tongue;
But I was haunted by the monstrous ghost
Of all our slain battalions. Sire, reflect,
And pardon you will grant, that, at this hour,
The bruised remnants of our stricken camp
Are huddling undistinguished, my dear friends,
With common thousands, into shallow graves.
Otho. Enough, most noble Gersa. You are free
To cheer the brave remainder of your host
By your own healing presence, and that too,
Not as their leader merely, but their king;
For, as I hear, the wily enemy,
Who eas'd the crownet from your infant brows,
Bloody Taraxa, is among the dead.
Gersa. Then I retire, so generous Otho please,
Bearing with me a weight of benefits
Too heavy to be borne.
Otho. It is not so;
Still understand me, King of Hungary,
Nor judge my open purposes awry.
Though I did hold you high in my esteem

For your self's sake, I do not personate
The stage-play emperor to entrap applause,
To set the silly sort o' the world agape,
And make the politic smile; no, I have heard
How in the Council you condemn'd this war,
Urging the perfidy of broken faith,—
For that I am your friend.

Gersa. If ever, sire,
You are my enemy, I dare here swear
Twill not be Gersa's fault. Otho, farewell!

Otho. Will you return, Prince, to our banqueting?

Gersa. As to my father's board I will return.

Otho. Conrad, with all due ceremony, give
The prince a regal escort to his camp;
Albert, go thou and bear him company.
Gersa, farewell!

Gersa. All happiness attend you!

Otho. Return with what good speed you may; for soon
We must consult upon our terms of peace.

[*Exeunt* GERSA *and* ALBERT *with others.*

And thus a marble column do I build
To prop my empire's dome. Conrad, in thee
I have another steadfast one, to uphold
The portals of my state; and, for my own
Pre-eminence and safety, I will strive
To keep thy strength upon its pedestal.

For, without thee, this day I might have been
A show-monster about the streets of Prague,
In chains, as just now stood that noble prince:
And then to me no mercy had been shown,
For when the conquer'd lion is once dungeoned,
Who lets him forth again? or dares to give
An old lion sugar-cakes of mild reprieve?
Not to thine ear alone I make confession,
But to all here, as, by experience,
I know how the great basement of all power
Is frankness, and a true tongue to the world;
And how intriguing secresy is proof
Of fear and weakness, and a hollow state.
Conrad, I owe thee much.

Conrad. To kiss that hand,
My emperor, is ample recompense,
For a mere act of duty.

Otho. Thou art wrong;
For what can any man on earth do more?
We will make trial of your house's welcome,
My bright Auranthe!

Conrad. How is Friedburg honoured!

Enter ETHELBERT *and six Monks.*

Ethelbert. The benizon of heaven on your head,
Imperial Otho!

Otho. Who stays me? Speak! Quick!

Ethelbert. Pause but one moment, mighty conqueror!
Upon the threshold of this house of joy.

Otho. Pray, do not prose, good Ethelbert, but speak
What is your purpose.

Ethelbert. The restoration of some captive maids,
Devoted to Heaven's pious ministries,
Who, driven forth from their religious cells,
And kept in thraldom by our enemy,
When late this province was a lawless spoil,
Still weep amid the wild Hungarian camp,
Though hemm'd around by thy victorious arms.

Otho. Demand the holy sisterhood in our name
From Gersa's tents. Farewell, old Ethelbert.

Ethelbert. The saints will bless you for this pious care.

Otho. Daughter, your hand; Ludolph's would fit it best.

Conrad. Ho! let the music sound!

[*Music.* ETHELBERT *raises his hands, as in benediction of* OTHO. *Exeunt severally. The scene closes on them.*

SCENE III.—*The Country, with the Castle in the distance.*

Enter LUDOLPH *and* SIGIFRED.

Ludolph. You have my secret; let it not be breath'd.

Sigifred. Still give me leave to wonder that the prince,
Ludolph, and the swift Arab are the same;
Still to rejoice that 'twas a German arm
Death doing in a turban'd masquerade.

Ludolph. The emperor must not know it, Sigifred.

Sigifred. I pr'ythee, why? What happier hour of time
Could thy pleased star point down upon from heaven
With silver index, bidding thee make peace?

Ludolph. Still it must not be known, good Sigifred;
The star may point oblique.

Sigifred. If Otho knew
His son to be that unknown Mussulman,
After whose spurring heels he sent me forth,
With one of his well-pleased Olympian oaths,
The charters of man's greatness, at this hour
He would be watching round the castle walls,
And, like an anxious warder, strain his sight
For the first glimpse of such a son return'd—
Ludolph, that blast of the Hungarians,
That Saracenic meteor of the fight,
That silent fury, whose fell scymitar
Kept danger all aloof from Otho's head,
And left him space for wonder.

Ludolph. Say no more.
Not as a swordsman would I pardon claim,

But as a son. The bronzed centurion,
Long toil'd in foreign wars, and whose high deeds
Are shaded in a forest of tall spears,
Known only to his troop, hath greater plea
Of favour with my sire than I can have.

Sigifred. My lord, forgive me that I cannot see
How this proud temper with clear reason squares.
What made you then, with such an anxious love,
Hover around that life, whose bitter days
You vext with bad revolt? Was 't opium,
Or the mad-fumed wine? Nay, do not frown,
I rather would grieve with you than upbraid.

Ludolph. I do believe you. No, 'twas not to make
A father his son's debtor, or to heal
His deep heart-sickness for a rebel child.
'Twas done in memory of my boyish days,
Poor cancel for his kindness to my youth,
For all his calming of my childish griefs,
And all his smiles upon my merriment.
No, not a thousand foughten fields could sponge
Those days paternal from my memory,
Though now upon my head he heaps disgrace.

Sigifred. My prince, you think too harshly—

Ludolph. Can I so?
Hath he not gall'd my spirit to the quick?
And with a sullen rigour obstinate
Pour'd out a phial of wrath upon my faults?

Hunted me as the Tartar does the boar,
Driven me to the very edge o' the world,
And almost put a price upon my head?

Sigifred. Remember how he spared the rebel lords.

Ludolph. Yes, yes, I know he hath a noble nature
That cannot trample on the fallen. But his
Is not the only proud heart in his realm.
He hath wrong'd me, and I have done him wrong;
He hath loved me, and I have shown him kindness;
We should be almost equal.

Sigifred. Yet, for all this,
I would you had appear'd among those lords,
And ta'en his favour.

Ludolph. Ha! till now I thought
My friend had held poor Ludolph's honour dear.
What! would you have me sue before his throne
And kiss the courtier's missal, its silk steps?
Or hug the golden housings of his steed,
Amid a camp, whose steeled swarms I dared
But yesterday? And, at the trumpet sound,
Bow like some unknown mercenary's flag
And lick the soiled grass? No, no, my friend,
I would not, I, be pardon'd in the heap,
And bless indemnity with all that scum,—
Those men I mean, who on my shoulders propp'd
Their weak rebellion, winning me with lies,
And pitying forsooth my many wrongs;

Poor self-deceived wretches, who must think
Each one himself a king in embryo,
Because some dozen vassals cry'd—my lord!
Cowards, who never knew their little hearts,
Till flurried danger held the mirror up,
And then they own'd themselves without a blush,
Curling, like spaniels, round my father's feet.
Such things deserted me and are forgiven,
While I, least guilty, am an outcast still,
And will be, for I love such fair disgrace.

Sigifred. I know the clear truth; so would Otho see,
For he is just and noble. Fain would I
Be pleader for you—

Ludolph. He 'll hear none of it;
You know his temper, hot, proud, obstinate;
Endanger not yourself so uselessly.
I will encounter his thwart spleen myself,
To-day, at the Duke Conrad's, where he keeps
His crowded state after the victory,
There will I be, a most unwelcome guest,
And parley with him, as a son should do,
Who doubly loathes a father's tyranny;
Tell him how feeble is that tyranny;
How the relationship of father and son
Is no more valid than a silken leash
Where lions tug adverse, if love grow not
From interchanged love through many years.

Ay, and those turreted Franconian walls,
Like to a jealous casket, hold my pearl—
My fair Auranthe! Yes, I will be there.

Sigifred. Be not so rash; wait till his wrath shall pass,
Until his royal spirit softly ebbs
Self-influenced; then, in his morning dreams
He will forgive thee, and awake in grief
To have not thy good morrow.

Ludolph. Yes, to-day
I must be there, while her young pulses beat
Among the new-plumed minions of the war.
Have you seen her of late? No? Auranthe,
Franconia's fair sister, 'tis I mean.
She should be paler for my troublous days—
And there it is—my father's iron lips
Have sworn divorcement 'twixt me and my right.

Sigifred (*aside*). Auranthe! I had hoped this whim had pass'd.

Ludolph. And, Sigifred, with all his love of justice,
When will he take that grandchild in his arms,
That, by my love I swear, shall soon be his?
This reconcilement is impossible,
For see—but who are these?

Sigifred. They are messengers
From our great emperor; to you I doubt not,
For couriers are abroad to seek you out.

Enter THEODORE *and* GONFRED.

Theodore. Seeing so many vigilant eyes explore
The province to invite your highness back
To your high dignities, we are too happy.

Gonfred. We have no eloquence to colour justly
The emperor's anxious wishes.

Ludolph. Go. I follow you.

[*Exeunt* THEODORE *and* GONFRED.

I play the prude: it is but venturing—
Why should he be so earnest? Come, my friend,
Let us to Friedburg castle.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*An ante-chamber in the Castle.*

Enter LUDOLPH *and* SIGIFRED.

Ludolph. No more advices, no more cautioning;
I leave it all to fate—to any thing!
I cannot square my conduct to time, place,
Or circumstance; to me 'tis all a mist!

Sigifred. I say no more.

Ludolph. It seems I am to wait
Here in the ante-room;—that may be a trifle.

You see now how I dance attendance here,
Without that tyrant temper, you so blame,
Snapping the rein. You have medicin'd me
With good advices; and I here remain,
In this most honourable ante-room,
Your patient scholar.

Sigifred. Do not wrong me, Prince.
By Heavens, I'd rather kiss Duke Conrad's slipper,
When in the morning he doth yawn with pride,
Than see you humbled but a half-degree!
Truth is, the Emperor would fain dismiss
The Nobles ere he sees you.

Enter GONFRED, *from the Council-room.*

Ludolph. Well, sir! what!

Gonfred. Great honour to the Prince! The Emperor,
Hearing that his brave son had re-appeared,
Instant dismiss'd the Council from his sight,
As Jove fans off the clouds. Even now they pass.

[*Exit.*

[*Enter the Nobles from the Council-room. They cross the Stage, bowing with respect to* LUDOLPH, *he frowning on them.* CONRAD *follows. Exeunt Nobles.*

Ludolph. Not the discoloured poisons of a fen,
Which he, who breathes, feels warning of his death,
Could taste so nauseous to the bodily sense,

As these prodigious sycophants disgust
The soul's fine palate.

Conrad. Princely Ludolph, hail!
Welcome, thou younger sceptre to the realm!
Strength to thy virgin crownet's golden buds,
That they, against the winter of thy sire,
May burst, and swell, and flourish round thy brows,
Maturing to a weighty diadem!
Yet be that hour far off; and may he live,
Who waits for thee, as the chapp'd earth for rain.
Set my life's star! I have lived long enough,
Since under my glad roof, propitiously,
Father and son each other re-possess.

Ludolph. Fine wording, Duke! but words could never yet
Forestall the fates; have you not learnt that yet?
Let me look well: your features are the same;
Your gait the same; your hair of the same shade;
As one I knew some passed weeks ago,
Who sung far different notes into mine ears.
I have mine own particular comments on 't;
You have your own perhaps.

Conrad. My gracious Prince,
All men may err. In truth I was deceived
In your great father's nature, as you were.
Had I known that of him I have since known,
And what you soon will learn, I would have turn'd

My sword to my own throat, rather than held
Its threatening edge against a good King's quiet:
Or with one word fever'd you, gentle Prince,
Who seem'd to me, as rugged times then went,
Indeed too much oppress'd. May I be bold
To tell the Emperor you will haste to him?

Ludolph. Your Dukedom's privilege will grant so much. [*Exit* CONRAD.

He 's very close to Otho, a tight leech!
Your hand—I go! Ha! here the thunder comes
Sullen against the wind! If in two angry brows
My safety lies, then Sigifred, I 'm safe.

Enter OTHO *and* CONRAD.

Otho. Will you make Titan play the lackey-page
To chattering pigmies? I would have you know
That such neglect of our high Majesty
Annuls all feel of kindred. What is son,—
Or friend,—or brother,—or all ties of blood,—
When the whole kingdom, centred in ourself,
Is rudely slighted? Who am I to wait?
By Peter's chair! I have upon my tongue
A word to fright the proudest spirit here!—
Death!—and slow tortures to the hardy fool,
Who dares take such large charter from our smiles!
Conrad, we would be private! Sigifred!
Off! And none pass this way on pain of death!

[*Exeunt* CONRAD *and* SIGIFRED.

Ludolph. This was but half expected, my good sire,
Yet I am grieved at it, to the full height,
As though my hopes of favour had been whole.

Otho. How you indulge yourself! What can you hope for?

Ludolph. Nothing, my liege, I have to hope for nothing.
I come to greet you as a loving son,
And then depart, if I may be so free,
Seeing that blood of yours in my warm veins
Has not yet mitigated into milk.

Otho. What would you, sir?

Ludolph. A lenient banishment;
So please you let me unmolested pass
This Conrad's gates, to the wide air again.
I want no more. A rebel wants no more.

Otho. And shall I let a rebel loose again
To muster kites and eagles 'gainst my head?
No, obstinate boy, you shall be kept caged up,
Served with harsh food, with scum for Sunday-drink.

Ludolph. Indeed!

Otho. And chains too heavy for your life:
I 'll choose a jailor, whose swart monstrous face
Shall be a hell to look upon, and she—

Ludolph. Ha!

Otho. Shall be your fair Auranthe.

Ludolph. Amaze! Amaze!

Otho. To-day you marry her.

Ludolph. This is a sharp jest!

Otho. No. None at all. When have I said a lie?

Ludolph. If I sleep not, I am a waking wretch.

Otho. Not a word more.. Let me embrace my child.

Ludolph. I dare not. 'Twould pollute so good a father!

O heavy crime! that your son's blinded eyes
Could not see all his parent's love aright,
As now I see it. Be not kind to me—
Punish me not with favour.

Otho. Are you sure,
Ludolph, you have no saving plea in store?

Ludolph. My father, none!

Otho. Then you astonish me.

Ludolph. No, I have no plea. Disobedience,
Rebellion, obstinacy, blasphemy,
Are all my counsellors. If they can make
My crooked deeds show good and plausible,
Then grant me loving pardon, but not else,
Good Gods! not else, in any way, my liege!

Otho. You are a most perplexing, noble boy.

Ludolph. You not less a perplexing noble father.

Otho. Well, you shall have free passport through the gates.
Farewell!

Ludolph. Farewell! and by these tears believe,
And still remember, I repent in pain
All my misdeeds!

Otho. Ludolph, I will! I will!
But, Ludolph, ere you go, I would enquire
If you, in all your wandering, ever met
A certain Arab haunting in these parts.

Ludolph. No, my good lord, I cannot say I did.

Otho. Make not your father blind before his time;
Nor let these arms paternal hunger more
For an embrace, to dull the appetite
Of my great love for thee, my supreme child!
Come close, and let me breathe into thine ear.
I knew you through disguise. You are the Arab!
You can't deny it. [*Embracing him.*

Ludolph. Happiest of days!

Otho. We 'll make it so.

Ludolph. 'Stead of one fatted calf
Ten hecatombs shall bellow out their last,
Smote 'twixt the horns by the death-stunning mace
Of Mars, and all the soldiery shall feast
Nobly as Nimrod's masons, when the towers
Of Nineveh new kiss'd the parted clouds!

Otho. Large as a God speak out, where all is thine.

Ludolph. Ay, father, but the fire in my sad breast
Is quench'd with inward tears! I must rejoice
For you, whose wings so shadow over me

In tender victory, but for myself
I still must mourn. The fair Auranthe mine!
Too great a boon! I pr'ythee let me ask
What more than I know of could so have changed
Your purpose touching her.

Otho. At a word, this:
In no deed did you give me more offence
Than your rejection of Erminia.
To my appalling, I saw too good proof
Of your keen-eyed suspicion,—she is naught!

Ludolph. You are convinc'd?

Otho. Ay, spite of her sweet looks.
O, that my brother's daughter should so fall!
Her fame has pass'd into the grosser lips
Of soldiers in their cups.

Ludolph. 'Tis very sad.

Otho. No more of her. Auranthe—Ludolph, come!
This marriage be the bond of endless peace!

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*The entrance of* GERSA'S *Tent in the Hungarian Camp.*

Enter ERMINIA.

Erminia. Where! where! where shall I find a messenger?
A trusty soul? A good man in the camp?

Shall I go myself? Monstrous wickedness!
O cursed Conrad! devilish Auranthe!
Here is proof palpable as the bright sun!
O for a voice to reach the emperor's ears!

[*Shouts in the camp.*

Enter an HUNGARIAN CAPTAIN.

Captain. Fair prisoner, you hear these joyous shouts?
The king—aye, now our king,—but still your slave,
Young Gersa, from a short captivity
Has just return'd. He bids me say, bright dame,
That even the homage of his ranged chiefs
Cures not his keen impatience to behold
Such beauty once again. What ails you, lady?

Erminia. Say, is not that a German, yonder? There!

Captain. Methinks by his stout bearing he should be—
Yes—it is Albert; a brave German knight,
And much in the emperor's favour.

Erminia. I would fain
Enquire of friends and kinsfolk; how they fared
In these rough times. Brave soldier, as you pass
To royal Gersa with my humble thanks,
Will you send yonder knight to me?

Captain. I will. *Exit.*

Erminia. Yes, he was ever known to be a man
Frank, open, generous; Albert I may trust.
O proof! proof! proof! Albert's an honest man;
Not Ethelbert the monk, if he were here,
Would I hold more trustworthy. Now!

Enter ALBERT.

Albert. Good Gods!
Lady Erminia! are you prisoner
In this beleaguer'd camp? Or are you here
Of your own will? You pleased to send for me.
By Venus, 'tis a pity I knew not
Your plight before, and, by her Son, I swear
To do you every service you can ask.
What would the fairest —?

Erminia. Albert, will you swear?

Albert. I have. Well!

Erminia. Albert, you have fame to lose.
If men, in court and camp, lie not outright,
You should be, from a thousand, chosen forth
To do an honest deed. Shall I confide —?

Albert. Aye, anything to me, fair creature. Do,
Dictate my task. Sweet woman,—

Erminia. Truce with that.
You understand me not; and, in your speech,
I see how far the slander is abroad.

Without proof could you think me innocent?

Albert. Lady, I should rejoice to know you so.

Erminia. If you have any pity for a maid,
Suffering a daily death from evil tongues;
Any compassion for that Emperor's niece,
Who, for your bright sword and clear honesty,
Lifted you from the crowd of common men
Into the lap of honour;—save me, knight!

Albert. How? Make it clear; if it be possible,
I by the banner of Saint Maurice swear
To right you.

Erminia. Possible!—Easy. O my heart!
This letter 's not so soil'd but you may read it;—
Possible! There—that letter! Read—read it.

[*Gives him a letter.*

ALBERT (*reading.*)

"To the Duke Conrad.—Forget the threat you made at parting, and I will forget to send the Emperor letters and papers of your's I have become possessed of. His life is no trifle to me; his death you shall find none to yourself." (*Speaks to himself.*) 'Tis me—my life that 's pleaded for! (*Reads.*) "He, for his own sake, will be dumb as the grave. Erminia has my shame fix'd upon her, sure as a wen. We are safe. "AURANTHE."

A she-devil! A dragon! I her imp!

Fire of Hell! Auranthe—lewd demon!
Where got you this? Where? When?

Erminia. I found it in the tent, among some spoils
Which, being noble, fell to Gersa's lot.
Come in, and see.

[*They go in and return.*

Albert. Villany! Villany!
Conrad's sword, his corslet, and his helm,
And his letter. Caitiff, he shall feel—

Erminia. I see you are thunderstruck. Haste. haste away!

Albert. O I am tortured by this villany.

Erminia. You needs must be. Carry it swift to Otho;
Tell him, moreover, I am prisoner
Here in this camp, where all the sisterhood,
Forced from their quiet cells, are parcell'd out
For slaves among these Huns. Away! Away!

Albert. I am gone.

Erminia. Swift be your steed! Within this hour
The Emperor will see it.

Albert. Ere I sleep:
That I can swear. [*Hurries out.*

Gersa (without). Brave captains! thanks. Enough
Of loyal homage now!

Enter GERSA.

Erminia. Hail, royal Hun!

Gersa. What means this, fair one? Why in such alarm?
Who was it hurried by me so distract?
It seem'd you were in deep discourse together;
Your doctrine has not been so harsh to him
As to my poor deserts. Come, come, be plain.
I am no jealous fool to kill you both,
Or, for such trifles, rob th' adorned world
Of such a beauteous vestal.

Erminia. I grieve, my Lord,
To hear you condescend to ribald-phrase.

Gersa. This is too much! Hearken, my lady pure!

Erminia. Silence! and hear the magic of a name—
Erminia! I am she,—the Emperor's niece!
Praised be the Heavens, I now dare own myself!

Gersa. Erminia! Indeed! I 've heard of her.
Pr'ythee, fair lady, what chance brought you here?

Erminia. Ask your own soldiers.

Gersa. And you dare own your name.
For loveliness you may—and for the rest
My vein is not censorious.

Erminia. Alas! poor me!
Tis false indeed.

Gersa. Indeed you are too fair:
The swan, soft leaning on her fledgy breast,
When to the stream she launches, looks not back

With such a tender grace; nor are her wings
So white as your soul is, if that but be
Twin picture to your face. Erminia!
To-day, for the first day, I am a king,
Yet would I give my unworn crown away
To know you spotless.

Erminia. Trust me one day more,
Generously, without more certain guarantee,
Than this poor face you deign to praise so much;
After that, say and do whate'er you please.
If I have any knowledge of you, sir,
I think, nay I am sure you will grieve much
To hear my story. O be gentle to me,
For I am sick and faint with many wrongs,
Tired out, and weary-worn with contumelies.

Gersa. Poor lady!

Enter ETHELBERT.

Erminia. Gentle Prince, 'tis false indeed.
Good morrow, holy father! I have had
Your prayers, though I look'd for you in vain.

Ethelbert. Blessings upon you, daughter! Sure you look
Too cheerful for these foul pernicious days.
Young man, you heard this virgin say 'twas false,—
'Tis false I say. What! can you not employ
Your temper elsewhere, 'mong these burly tents,
But you must taunt this dove, for she hath lost

The Eagle Otho to beat off assault.
Fie! Fie! But I will be her guard myself;
I' the Emperor's name. I here demand
Herself, and all her sisterhood. She false!

Gersa. Peace! peace, old man! I cannot think she is.

Ethelbert. Whom I have known from her first infancy,
Baptised her in the bosom of the Church,
Watch'd her, as anxious husbandmen the grain,
From the first shoot till the unripe mid-May,
Then to the tender ear of her June days,
Which, lifting sweet abroad its timid green,
Is blighted by the touch of calumny;
You cannot credit such a monstrous tale.

Gersa. I cannot. Take her. Fair Erminia,
I follow you to Friedburg,—is 't not so?

Erminia. Ay, so we purpose.

Ethelbert. Daughter, do you so?
How 's this? I marvel! Yet you look not mad.

Erminia. I have good news to tell you, Ethelbert.

Gersa. Ho! ho, there! Guards!
Your blessing, father! Sweet Erminia,
Believe me, I am well nigh sure—

Erminia. Farewell!
Short time will show. [*Enter Chiefs.*

Yes, father Ethelbert,
I have news precious as we pass along.

Ethelbert. Dear daughter, you shall guide me.

Erminia. To no ill.

Gersa. Command an escort to the Friedburg lines.

[*Exeunt Chiefs.*

Pray let me lead. Fair lady, forget not
Gersa, how he believed you innocent.
I follow you to Friedburg with all speed.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The Country.*

Enter ALBERT.

Albert. O that the earth were empty, as when Cain
Had no perplexity to hide his head!
Or that the sword of some brave enemy
Had put a sudden stop to my hot breath,
And hurl'd me down the illimitable gulph
Of times past, unremember'd! Better so
Than thus fast-limed in a cursed snare,
The white limbs of a wanton. This the end

Of an aspiring life! My boyhood past
In feud with wolves and bears, when no eye saw
The solitary warfare, fought for love
Of honour 'mid the growling wilderness.
My sturdier youth, maturing to the sword,
Won by the syren-trumpets, and the ring
Of shields upon the pavement, when bright mail'd
Henry the Fowler pass'd the streets of Prague.
Was 't to this end I louted and became
The menial of Mars, and held a spear
Sway'd by command, as corn is by the wind?
Is it for this, I now am lifted up
By Europe's throned Emperor, to see
My honour be my executioner,—
My love of fame, my prided honesty
Put to the torture for confessional?
Then the damn'd crime of blurting to the world
A woman's secret!—Though a fiend she be,
Too tender of my ignominious life;
But then to wrong the generous Emperor
In such a searching point, were to give up
My soul for foot-ball at Hell's holiday!
I must confess,—and cut my throat,—to-day?
To-morrow? Ho! some wine!

Enter SIGIFRED.

Sigifred. A fine humour—

Albert. Who goes there? Count Sigifred? Ha! ha!

Sigifred. What, man, do you mistake the hollow sky
For a throng'd tavern,—and these stubbed trees
For old serge hangings,—me, your humble friend,
For a poor waiter? Why, man, how you stare!
What gipsies have you been carousing with?
No, no more wine; methinks you 've had enough.

Albert. You well may laugh and banter. What a fool
An injury may make of a staid man!
You shall know all anon.

Sigifred. Some tavern brawl?

Albert. 'Twas with some people out of common reach;
Revenge is difficult.

Sigifred. I am your friend;
We meet again to-day, and can confer
Upon it. For the present I 'm in haste.

Albert. Whither?

Sigifred. To fetch King Gersa to the feast.
The Emperor on this marriage is so hot,
Pray Heaven it end not in apoplexy!
The very porters, as I pass'd the doors,
Heard his loud laugh, and answer'd in full choir.
I marvel, Albert, you delay so long
From these bright revelries; go, show yourself,
You may be made a duke.

Albert. Ay, very like:
Pray, what day has his Highness fix'd upon?

Sigifred. For what?

Albert. The marriage. What else can
I mean?

Sigifred. To-day. O, I forgot, you could not know;
The news is scarce a minute old with me.

Albert. Married to-day! To-day! You did not say so?

Sigifred. Now, while I speak to you, their comely
heads
Are bowed before the mitre.

Albert. O! monstrous!

Sigifred. What is this?

Albert. Nothing, Sigifred. Farewell!
We 'll meet upon our subject. Farewell, count!

[*Exit.*

Sigifred. To this clear-headed Albert? He brain-
turn'd!
'Tis as portentous as a meteor.

[*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*An Apartment in the Castle.*

[*Enter as from the Marriage,* OTHO, LUDOLPH, AURANTHE, CONRAD, *Nobles, Knights, Ladies, &c., &c., &c. Music.*

Otho. Now, Ludolph! Now, Auranthe! Daughter
fair!
What can I find to grace your nuptial day
More than my love, and these wide realms in fee?

Ludolph. I have too much.

Auranthe. And I, my liege, by far.

Ludolph. Auranthe! I have! O, my bride, my love!
Not all the gaze upon us can restrain
My eyes, too long poor exiles from thy face,
From adoration, and my foolish tongue
From uttering soft responses to the love
I see in thy mute beauty beaming forth!
Fair creature, bless me with a single word!
All mine!

Auranthe. Spare, spare me, my Lord; I swoon else.

Ludolph. Soft beauty! by to-morrow I should die,
Wert thou not mine.

[*They talk apart.*

1*st Lady.* How deep she has bewitch'd him!

1*st Knight.* Ask you for her recipe for love philtres.

2*nd Lady.* They hold the Emperor in admiration.

Otho. If ever king was happy, that am I!
What are the cities 'yond the Alps to me,
The provinces about the Danube's mouth,
The promise of fair sail beyond the Rhone;
Or routing out of Hyperborean hordes,
To these fair children, stars of a new age?
Unless perchance I might rejoice to win
This little ball of earth, and chuck it them
To play with!

Auranthe. Nay, my Lord, I do not know.

Ludolph. Let me not famish.

Otho (*to Conrad*). Good Franconia,
You heard what oath I sware, as the sun rose,
That unless Heaven would send me back my son,
My Arab,—no soft music should enrich
The cool wine, kiss'd off with a soldier's smack;
Now all my empire, barter'd for one feast,
Seems poverty.

Conrad. Upon the neighbour-plain
The heralds have prepared a royal lists;
Your knights, found war-proof in the bloody field,
Speed to the game.

Otho. Well, Ludolph, what say you?

Ludolph. My lord!

Otho. A tourney?

Conrad. Or, if 't please you best—

Ludolph. I want no more!

1*st Lady.* He soars!

2*nd Lady.* Past all reason.

Ludolph. Though heaven's choir
Should in a vast circumference descend,
And sing for my delight, I 'd stop my ears!
Though bright Apollo's car stood burning here,
And he put out an arm to bid me mount,
His touch an immortality, not I!
This earth, this palace, this room, Auranthe!

Otho. This is a little painful; just too much.

Conrad, if he flames longer in this wise,
I shall believe in wizard-woven loves
And old romances; but I 'll break the spell.
Ludolph!

Conrad. He 'll be calm, anon.

Ludolph. You call'd!
Yes, yes, yes, I offend. You must forgive me;
Not being quite recover'd from the stun
Of your large bounties. A tourney, is it not?

[*A scnet heard faintly.*

Conrad. The trumpets reach us.

Ethelbert (*without*). On your peril, sirs,
Detain us!

1*st Voice* (*without*). Let not the abbot pass.

2*nd Voice* (*without*). No,
On your lives!

1*st Voice* (*without*). Holy father, you must not.

Ethelbert (*without*). Otho!

Otho. Who calls on Otho?

Ethelbert (*without*). Ethelbert!

Otho. Let him come in.

[*Enter* Ethelbert *leading in* Erminia.

Thou cursed abbot, why
Hast brought pollution to our holy rites?
Hast thou no fear of hangman, or the faggot?

Ludolph. What portent—what strange prodigy is this?

Conrad. Away!

Ethelbert. You, Duke?

Erminia. Albert has surely fail'd me!
Look at the Emperor's brow upon me bent!

Ethelbert. A sad delay!

Conrad. Away, thou guilty thing!

Ethelbert. You again, Duke? Justice, most noble Otho!
You—go to your sister there and plot again,
A quick plot, swift as thought to save your heads;
For lo! the toils are spread around your den,
The world is all agape to see dragg'd forth
Two ugly monsters.

Ludolph. What means he, my lord?

Conrad. I cannot guess.

Ethelbert. Best ask your lady sister,
Whether the riddle puzzles her beyond
The power of utterance.

Conrad. Foul barbarian, cease;
The Princess faints!

Ludolph. Stab him! O, sweetest wife!

[*Attendants bear off* AURANTHE.

Erminia. Alas!

Ethelbert. Your wife!

Ludolph. Ay, Satan! does that yerk ye?

Ethelbert. Wife! so soon!

Ludolph. Ay, wife! Oh, impudence!
Thou bitter mischief! Venemous bad priest!
How dar'st thou lift those beetle brows at me?
Me—the prince Ludolph, in this presence here,
Upon my marriage-day, and scandalise
My joys with such opprobrious surprise?
Wife! Why dost linger on that syllable,
As if it were some demon's name pronounc'd
To summon harmful lightning, and make yawn
The sleepy thunder? Hast no sense of fear?
No ounce of man in thy mortality?
Tremble! for, at my nod, the sharpen'd axe
Will make thy bold tongue quiver to the roots,
Those grey lids wink, and thou not know it, monk!

Ethelbert. O, poor deceived Prince! I pity thee!
Great Otho! I claim justice—

Ludolph. Thou shalt have 't!
Thine arms from forth a pulpit of hot fire
Shall sprawl distracted! O that that dull cowl
Were some most sensitive portion of thy life,
That I might give it to my hounds to tear!
Thy girdle some fine zealous-pained nerve
To girth my saddle! And those devil's beads
Each one a life, that I might, every day,
Crush one with Vulcan's hammer!

Otho. Peace, my son;
You far outstrip my spleen in this affair.

Let us be calm, and hear the abbot's plea
For this intrusion.

Ludolph. I am silent, sire.

Otho. Conrad, see all depart not wanted here.

[*Exeunt Knights, Ladies, &c.*

Ludolph, be calm. Ethelbert, peace awhile.
This mystery demands an audience
Of a just judge, and that will Otho be.

Ludolph. Why has he time to breathe another word?

Otho. Ludolph, old Ethelbert, be sure, comes not
To beard us for no cause; he's not the man
To cry himself up an ambassador
Without credentials.

Ludolph. I 'll chain up myself.

Otho. Old abbot, stand here forth. Lady Erminia,
Sit. And now, abbot! what have you to say?
Our ear is open. First we here denounce
Hard penalties against thee, if 't be found
The cause for which you have disturb'd us here,
Making our bright hours muddy, be a thing
Of little moment.

Ethelbert. See this innocent!
Otho! thou father of the people call'd,
Is her life nothing? Her fair honour nothing?
Her tears from matins until even-song
Nothing? Her burst heart nothing? Emperor!

Is this your gentle niece—the simplest flower
Of the world's herbal—this fair lily blanch'd
Still with the dews of piety, this meek lady
Here sitting like an angel newly-shent,
Who veils its snowy wings and grows all pale,—
Is she nothing?

Otho. What more to the purpose, abbot?

Ludolph. Whither is he winding?

Conrad. No clue yet!

Ethelbert. You have heard, my Liege, and so, no doubt, all here,
Foul, poisonous, malignant whisperings;
Nay open speech, rude mockery grown common,
Against the spotless nature and clear fame
Of the princess Erminia, your niece.
I have intruded here thus suddenly,
Because I hold those base weeds, with tight hand,
Which now disfigure her fair growing stem,
Waiting but for your sign to pull them up
By the dark roots, and leave her palpable,
To all men's sight, a lady innocent.
The ignominy of that whisper'd tale
About a midnight gallant, seen to climb
A window to her chamber neighbour'd near,
I will from her turn off, and put the load
On the right shoulders; on that wretch's head,
Who, by close stratagems, did save herself,

Chiefly by shifting to this lady's room
A rope-ladder for false witness.

Ludolph. Most atrocious!

Otho. Ethelbert, proceed.

Ethelbert. With sad lips I shall:
For, in the healing of one wound, I fear
To make a greater. His young highness here
To-day was married.

Ludolph. Good.

Ethelbert. Would it were good!
Yet why do I delay to spread abroad
The names of those two vipers, from whose jaw
A deadly breath went forth to taint and blast
This guileless lady?

Otho. Abbot, speak their names.

Ethelbert. A minute first. It cannot be—but may
I ask, great judge, if you to-day have put
A letter by unread?

Otho. Does 't end in this?

Conrad. Out with their names!

Ethelbert. Bold sinner, say you so?

Ludolph. Out, hideous monk!

Otho. Confess, or by the wheel—

Ethelbert. My evidence cannot be far away;
And, though it never come, be on my head
The crime of passing an attaint upon
The slanderers of this virgin.

Ludolph. Speak aloud!

Ethelbert. Auranthe! and her brother there.

Conrad. Amaze!

Ludolph. Throw them from the windows!

Otho. Do what you will!

Ludolph. What shall I do with them?
Something of quick dispatch, for should she hear,
My soft Auranthe, her sweet mercy would
Prevail against my fury. Damned priest!
What swift death wilt thou die? As to the lady
I touch her not.

Ethelbert. Illustrious Otho, stay!
An ample store of misery thou hast,
Choak not the granary of thy noble mind
With more bad bitter grain, too difficult
A cud for the repentance of a man
Grey-growing. To thee only I appeal,
Not to thy noble son, whose yeasting youth
Will clear itself, and crystal turn again.
A young man's heart, by Heaven's blessing, is
A wide world, where a thousand new-born hopes
Empurple fresh the melancholy blood:
But an old man's is narrow, tenantless
Of hopes, and stuff'd with many memories,
Which, being pleasant, ease the heavy pulse—
Painful, clog up and stagnate. Weigh this matter
Even as a miser balances his coin;

And, in the name of mercy, give command
That your knight Albert be brought here before you.
He will expound this riddle; he will show
A noon-day proof of bad Auranthe's guilt.

Otho. Let Albert straight be summon'd.

[*Exit one of the Nobles.*

Ludolph. Impossible!
I cannot doubt—I will not—no—to doubt
Is to be ashes!—wither'd up to death!

Otho. My gentle Ludolph, harbour not a fear;
You do yourself much wrong.

Ludolph. O, wretched dolt!
Now, when my foot is almost on thy neck,
Wilt thou infuriate me? Proof! Thou fool!
Why wilt thou tease impossibility
With such a thick-skull'd persevering suit?
Fanatic obstinacy! Prodigy!
Monster of folly! Ghost of a turn'd brain!
You puzzle me,—you haunt me,—when I dream
Of you my brain will split! Bold sorcerer!
Juggler! May I come near you? On my soul
I know not whether to pity, curse, or laugh.

Enter ALBERT, *and the Nobleman.*

Here, Albert, this old phantom wants a proof!
Give him his proof! A camel's load of proofs!

Otho. Albert, I speak to you as to a man
Whose words once utter'd pass like current gold;
And therefore fit to calmly put a close
To this brief tempest. Do you stand possess'd
Of any proof against the honourableness
Of Lady Auranthe, our new-spoused daughter?

Albert. You chill me with astonishment. How 's this?
My Liege, what proof should I have 'gainst a fame
Impossible of slur?

[OTHO *rises.*

Erminia. O wickedness!

Ethelbert. Deluded monarch, 'tis a cruel lie.

Otho. Peace, rebel-priest!

Conrad. Insult beyond credence!

Erminia. Almost a dream!

Ludolph. We have awaked from!
A foolish dream that from my brow hath wrung
A wrathful dew. O folly! why did I
So act the lion with this silly gnat?
Let them depart. Lady Erminia!
I ever grieved for you, as who did not?
But now you have, with such a brazen front,
So most maliciously, so madly striven
To dazzle the soft moon, when tenderest clouds
Should be unloop'd around to curtain her;
I leave you to the desert of the world

Almost with pleasure. Let them be set free
For me! I take no personal revenge
More than against a nightmare, which a man
Forgets in the new dawn.

[*Exit* LUDOLPH.

Otho. Still in extremes! No, they must not be loose.

Ethelbert. Albert, I must suspect thee of a crime
So fiendish—

Otho. Fear'st thou not my fury, monk?
Conrad, be they in your safe custody
Till we determine some fit punishment.
It is so mad a deed, I must reflect
And question them in private; for perhaps,
By patient scrutiny, we may discover
Whether they merit death, or should be placed
In care of the physicians.

[*Exunt* OTHO *and Nobles,* ALBERT *following.*

Conrad. My guards, ho!

Erminia. Albert, wilt thou follow there?
Wilt thou creep dastardly behind his back,
And shrink away from a weak woman's eye?
Turn, thou court-Janus! thou forget'st thyself;
Here is the duke, waiting with open arms,

[*Enter Guards.*

To thank thee: here congratulate each other;
Wring hands; embrace; and swear how lucky 'twas

That I, by happy chance, hit the right man
Of all the world to trust in.

Albert. Trust! to me!

Conrad (*aside*). He is the sole one in this mystery.

Erminia. Well, I give up, and save my prayers for Heaven!
You, who could do this deed, would ne'er relent,
Though, at my words, the hollow prison-vaults
Would groan for pity.

Conrad. Manacle them both!

Ethelbert. I know it—it must be—I see it all!
Albert, thou art the minion!

Erminia. Ah! too plain—

Conrad. Silence! Gag up their mouths! I cannot bear
More of this brawling. That the Emperor
Had placed you in some other custody!
Bring them away.

[*Exeunt all but* ALBERT.

Albert. Though my name perish from the book of honour,
Almost before the recent ink is dry,
And be no more remember'd after death,
Than any drummer's in the muster-roll;
Yet shall I season high my sudden fall
With triumph o'er that evil-witted duke!
He shall feel what it is to have the hand

Of a man drowning, on his hateful throat.

Enter GERSA *and* SIGIFRED.

Gersa. What discord is at ferment in this house?

Sigifred. We are without conjecture; not a soul
We met could answer any certainty.

Gersa. Young Ludolph, like a fiery arrow, shot
By us.

Sigifred. The Emperor, with cross'd arms, in thought.

Gersa. In one room music, in another sadness,
Perplexity every where!

Albert. A trifle more!
Follow; your presences will much avail
To tune our jarred spirits. I 'll explain.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—AURANTHE'S *Apartment.*

AURANTHE *and* CONRAD *discovered.*

Conrad. Well, well, I know what ugly jeopardy
We are caged in; you need not pester that
Into my ears. Pr'ythee, let me be spared
A foolish tongue, that I may bethink me
Of remedies with some deliberation.

You cannot doubt but 'tis in Albert's power
To crush or save us?

Auranthe. No, I cannot doubt.
He has, assure yourself, by some strange means,
My secret; which I ever hid from him,
Knowing his mawkish honesty.

Conrad. Cursed slave!

Auranthe. Ay, I could almost curse him now myself.
Wretched impediment! Evil genius!
A glue upon my wings, that cannot spread,
When they should span the provinces! A snake,
A scorpion, sprawling on the first gold step,
Conducting to the throne, high canopied.

Conrad. You would not hear my counsel, when his life
Might have been trodden out, all sure and hush'd;
Now the dull animal forsooth must be
Intreated, managed! When can you contrive
The interview he demands?

Auranthe. As speedily
It must be done as my bribed woman can
Unseen conduct him to me; but I fear
'Twill be impossible, while the broad day
Comes through the panes with persecuting glare.
Methinks, if 't now were night I could intrigue
With darkness, bring the stars to second me,

And settle all this trouble.

Conrad. Nonsense! Child!
See him immediately; why not now?

Auranthe. Do you forget that even the senseless door-posts
Are on the watch and gape through all the house;
How many whisperers there are about,
Hungry for evidence to ruin me:
Men I have spurn'd, and women I have taunted.
Besides, the foolish prince sends, minute whiles,
His pages—so they tell me—to inquire
After my health, entreating, if I please,
To see me.

Conrad. Well, suppose this Albert here;
What is your power with him?

Auranthe. He should be
My echo, my taught parrot! but I fear
He will be cur enough to bark at me;
Have his own say; read me some silly creed
'Bout shame and pity.

Conrad. What will you do then?

Auranthe. What I shall do, I know not; what I would
Cannot be done; for see, this chamber-floor
Will not yield to the pick-axe and the spade,—
Here is no quiet depth of hollow ground.

Conrad. Sister, you have grown sensible and wise.

Seconding, ere I speak it, what is now,
I hope, resolved between us.

Auranthe. Say, what is 't?

Conrad. You need not be his sexton too; a man
May carry that with him shall make him die
Elsewhere,—give that to him; pretend the while
You will to-morrow succumb to his wishes,
Be what they may, and send him from the Castle
On some fool's errand: let his latest groan
Frighten the wolves!

Auranthe. Alas! he must not die!

Conrad. Would you were both hearsed up i stifling lead!
Detested—

Auranthe. Conrad, hold! I would not bear
The little thunder of your fretful tongue,
Tho' I alone were taken in these toils,
And you could free me; but remember, sir,
You live alone in my security:
So keep your wits at work, for your own sake,
Not mine, and be more mannerly.

Conrad. Thou wasp!
If my domains were emptied of these folk,
And I had thee to starve—

Auranthe. O, marvellous!
But Conrad, now be gone; the Host is look'd for;
Cringe to the Emperor, entertain the Lords,

And, do ye mind, above all things, proclaim
My sickness, with a brother's sadden'd eye,
Condoling with Prince Ludolph. In fit time
Return to me.

Conrad. I leave you to your thoughts.

[*Exit.*

Auranthe (*sola*). Down, down, proud temper! down,
Auranthe's pride!
Why do I anger him when I should kneel?
Conrad! Albert! help! help! What can I do?
O wretched woman! lost, wreck'd, swallow'd up,
Accursed, blasted! O, thou golden Crown,
Orbing along the serene firmament
Of a wide empire, like a glowing moon;
And thou, bright sceptre! lustrous in my eyes,—
There—as the fabled fair Hesperian tree,
Bearing a fruit more precious! graceful thing,
Delicate, godlike, magic! must I leave
Thee to melt in the visionary air,
Ere, by one grasp, this common hand is made
Imperial? I do not know the time
When I have wept for sorrow; but methinks
I could now sit upon the ground, and shed
Tears, tears of misery. O, the heavy day!
How shall I bear my life till Albert comes?
Ludolph! Erminia! Proofs! O heavy day!
Bring me some mourning weeds, that I may 'tire

Myself, as fits one wailing her own death:
Cut off these curls, and brand this lily hand,
And throw these jewels from my loathing sight,—
Fetch me a missal, and a string of beads,—
A cup of bitter'd water, and a crust,—
I will confess, O holy Abbot!—How!
What is this? Auranthe! thou fool, dolt,
Whimpering idiot! up! up! and quell!
I am safe! Coward! why am I in fear?
Albert! he cannot stickle, chew the cud
In such a fine extreme,—impossible!
Who knocks?

[*Goes to the door, listens, and opens it.*

Enter ALBERT.

Albert, I have been waiting for you here
With such an aching heart, such swooning throbs
On my poor brain, such cruel—cruel sorrow,
That I should claim your pity! Art not well?

Albert. Yes, lady, well.

Auranthe. You look not so, alas!
But pale, as if you brought some heavy news.

Albert. You know full well what makes me look so pale.

Auranthe. No! Do I? Surely I am still to learn
Some horror; all I know, this present, is
I am near hustled to a dangerous gulph,

Which you can save me from,—and therefore safe,
So trusting in thy love; that should not make
Thee pale, my Albert.

Albert. It doth make me freeze.

Auranthe. Why should it, love?

Albert. You should not ask me that,
But make your own heart monitor, and save
Me the great pain of telling. You must know.

Auranthe. Something has vext you, Albert. There are times
When simplest things put on a sombre cast;
A melancholy mood will haunt a man,
Until most easy matters take the shape
Of unachievable tasks; small rivulets
Then seem impassable.

Albert. Do not cheat yourself
With hope that gloss of words, or suppliant action,
Or tears, or ravings, or self-threaten'd death,
Can alter my resolve.

Auranthe. You make me tremble;
Not so much at your threats, as at your voice,
Untuned, and harsh, and barren of all love.

Albert. You suffocate me! Stop this devil's parley,
And listen to me; know me once for all.

Auranthe. I thought I did. Alas! I am deceived.

Albert. No, you are not deceived. You took me for
A man detesting all inhuman crime;

And therefore kept from me your demon's plot
Against Erminia. Silent? Be so still;
For ever! Speak no more; but hear my words,
Thy fate. Your safety I have bought to-day
By blazoning a lie, which in the dawn
I 'll expiate with truth.

Auranthe. O cruel traitor!

Albert. For I would not set eyes upon thy shame;
I would not see thee dragg'd to death by the hair,
Penanced, and taunted on a scaffolding!
To-night, upon the skirts of the blind wood
That blackens northward of these horrid towers,
I wait for you with horses. Choose your fate.
Farewell!

Auranthe. Albert, you jest; I 'm sure you must.
You, an ambitious Soldier! I, a Queen,
One who could say,—here, rule these Provinces!
Take tribute from those cities for thyself!
Empty these armouries, these treasuries,
Muster thy warlike thousands at a nod!
Go! conquer Italy!

Albert. Auranthe, you have made
The whole world chaff to me. Your doom is fix'd.

Auranthe. Out, villain! dastard!

Albert. Look there to the door!
Who is it?

Auranthe. Conrad, traitor!

Albert. Let him in.

Enter CONRAD.

Do not affect amazement, hypocrite,
At seeing me in this chamber.

Conrad. Auranthe?

Albert. Talk not with eyes, but speak your curses out
Against me, who would sooner crush and grind
A brace of toads, than league with them t' oppress
An innocent lady, gull an Emperor,
More generous to me than autumn-sun
To ripening harvests.

Auranthe. No more insult, sir.

Albert. Ay, clutch your scabbard; but, for prudence sake,
Draw not the sword; 'twould make an uproar, Duke,
You would not hear the end of. At nightfall
Your lady sister, if I guess aright,
Will leave this busy castle. You had best
Take farewell too of worldly vanities.

Conrad. Vassal!

Albert. To-morrow, when the Emperor sends
For loving Conrad, see you fawn on him.
Good even!

Auranthe. You 'll be seen!

Albert. See the coast clear then.

Auranthe (*as he goes*). Remorseless Albert! Cruel, cruel wretch!

[*She lets him out.*

Conrad. So, we must lick the dust?

Auranthe. I follow him.

Conrad. How? Where? The plan of your escape?

Auranthe. He waits
For me with horses by the forest-side,
Northward.

Conrad. Good, good; he dies. You go, say you?

Auranthe. Perforce.

Conrad. Be speedy, darkness! Till that comes, Fiends keep you company!

[*Exit.*

Auranthe. And you! And you!
And all men! Vanish!

[*Retires to an inner apartment.*

SCENE II.—*An Apartment in the Castle.*

Enter LUDOLPH *and Page.*

Page. Still very sick, my lord; but now I went,
And there her women, in a mournful throng,
Stood in the passage whispering; if any
Moved, 'twas with careful steps, and hush'd as death:
They bade me stop.

Ludolph. Good fellow, once again
Make soft inquiry; pr'ythee, be not stay'd
By any hindrance, but with gentlest force
Break through her weeping servants, till thou com'st
E'en to her chamber-door, and there, fair boy,—
If with thy mother's milk thou hast suck'd in
Any divine eloquence,—woo her ears
With plaints for me, more tender than the voice
Of dying Echo, echoed.

Page. Kindest master!
To know thee sad thus, will unloose my tongue
In mournful syllables. Let but my words reach
Her ears, and she shall take them coupled with
Moans from my heart, and sighs not counterfeit.
May I speed better!

[*Exit Page.*

Ludolph (solus). Auranthe! My life!
Long have I loved thee, yet till now not loved:
Remembering, as I do, hard-hearted times
When I had heard e'en of thy death perhaps,
And thoughtless!—suffer'd thee to pass alone
Into Elysium!—now I follow thee,
A substance or a shadow, wheresoe'er
Thou leadest me,—whether thy white feet press,
With pleasant weight, the amorous-aching earth,
Or thro' the air thou pioneerest me,
A shade! Yet sadly I predestinate!

O, unbenignest Love, why wilt thou let
Darkness steal out upon the sleepy world
So wearily, as if night's chariot-wheels
Were clogg'd in some thick cloud? O, changeful Love,
Let not her steeds with drowsy-footed pace
Pass the high stars, before sweet embassage
Comes from the pillow'd beauty of that fair
Completion of all delicate Nature's wit!
Pout her faint lips anew with rubious health;
And, with thine infant fingers, lift the fringe
Of her sick eye-lids; that those eyes may glow
With wooing light upon me, ere the morn
Peers with disrelish, grey, barren, and cold!

[*Enter* GERSA *and Courtiers.*

Otho calls me his Lion,—should I blush
To be so tamed? so—

Gersa. Do me the courtesy,
Gentlemen, to pass on.

1*st Knight.* We are your servants.

[*Exeunt Courtiers.*

Ludolph. It seems then, sir, you have found out the man
You would confer with;—me?

Gersa. If I break not
Too much upon your thoughtful mood, I will
Claim a brief while your patience.

Ludolph. For what cause
Soe'er, I shall be honour'd.

Gersa. I not less.

Ludolph. What may it be? No trifle can take place
Of such deliberate prologue, serious 'haviour.
But, be it what it may, I cannot fail
To listen with no common interest;
For tho' so new your presence is to me,
I have a soldier's friendship for your fame.
Please you explain.

Gersa. As thus:—for, pardon me,
I cannot, in plain terms, grossly assault
A noble nature; and would faintly sketch
What your quick apprehension will fill up;
So finely I esteem you.

Ludolph. I attend.

Gersa. Your generous father, most illustrious Otho,
Sits in the banquet-room among his chiefs;
His wine is bitter, for you are not there;
His eyes are fix'd still on the open doors,
And ev'ry passer in he frowns upon,
Seeing no Ludolph comes.

Ludolph. I do neglect.

Gersa. And for your absence may I guess the cause?

Ludolph. Stay there! No—guess? More princely
you must be
Than to make guesses at me. 'Tis enough.
I'm sorry I can hear no more.
Gersa. And I
As grieved to force it on you so abrupt;
Yet, one day, you must know a grief, whose sting
Will sharpen more the longer 'tis conceal'd.
Ludolph. Say it at once, sir! dead—dead—is she
dead?
Gersa. Mine is a cruel task: she is not dead,
And would, for your sake, she were innocent.
Ludolph. Hungarian! Thou amazest me beyond
All scope of thought, convulsest my heart's blood
To deadly churning! Gersa, you are young,
As I am; let me observe you, face to face:
Not grey-brow'd like the poisonous Ethelbert,
No rheumed eyes, no furrowing of age,
No wrinkles, where all vices nestle in
Like crannied vermin,—no! but fresh, and young.
And hopeful featured. Ha! by Heaven you weep!
Tears, human tears! Do you repent you then
Of a curs'd torturer's office? Why shouldst join,—
Tell me,—the league of devils? Confess—con-
fess—
The lie!
Gersa. Lie!—but begone all ceremonious points

Of honour battailous! I could not turn
My wrath against thee for the orbed world.
Ludolph. Your wrath, weak boy? Tremble at mine, unless
Retraction follow close upon the heels
Of that late stounding insult! Why has my sword
Not done already a sheer judgment on thee?
Despair, or eat thy words! Why, thou wast nigh
Whimpering away my reason! Hark 'e, sir,
It is no secret, that Erminia,
Erminia, sir, was hidden in your tent,—
O bless'd asylum! Comfortable home!
Begone! I pity thee; thou art a gull,
Erminia's last new puppet!
Gersa. Furious fire!
Thou mak'st me boil as hot as thou canst flame!
And in thy teeth I give thee back the lie!
Thou liest! Thou, Auranthe's fool! A wittol!
Ludolph. Look! look at this bright sword;
There is no part of it, to the very hilt,
But shall indulge itself about thine heart!
Draw! but remember thou must cower thy plumes,
As yesterday the Arab made thee stoop.
Gersa. Patience! Not here; I would not spill thy blood
Here, underneath this roof where Otho breathes,—
Thy father,—almost mine.

Ludolph. O faltering coward!

[*Enter Page.*

Stay, stay; here is one I have half a word with.
Well? What ails thee, child?

Page. My lord!

Ludolph. What wouldst say?

Page. They are fled!

Ludolph. They! Who?

Page. When anxiously
I hasten'd back, your grieving messenger,
I found the stairs all dark, the lamps extinct,
And not a foot or whisper to be heard.
I thought her dead, and on the lowest step
Sat listening; when presently came by
Two muffled up,—one sighing heavily,
The other cursing low, whose voice I knew
For the Duke Conrad's. Close I follow'd them
Thro' the dark ways they chose to the open air;
And, as I follow'd, heard my lady speak.

Ludolph. Thy life answers the truth!

Page. The chamber 's empty!

Ludolph. As I will be of mercy! So, at last,
This nail is in my temples!

Gersa. Be calm in this.

Ludolph. I am.

Gersa. And Albert too has disappear'd;

Ere I met you, I sought him everywhere;
You would not hearken.

Ludolph. Which way went they, boy?

Gersa. I 'll hunt with you.

Ludolph. No, no, no. My senses are
Still whole. I have survived. My arm is strong,—
My appetite sharp—for revenge! I 'll no sharer
In my feast; my injury is all my own,
And so is my revenge, my lawful chattels!
Terrier, ferret them out! Burn—burn the witch!
Trace me their footsteps! Away!

[*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A part of the Forest.*

Enter CONRAD *and* AURANTHE.

Auranthe. Go no further; not a step more. Thou art
A master-plague in the midst of miseries.
Go,—I fear thee! I tremble every limb,
Who never shook before. There 's moody death
In thy resolved looks! Yes, I could kneel
To pray thee far away! Conrad, go! go!—

There! yonder underneath the boughs I see
Our horses!

Conrad. Ay, and the man.

Auranthe. Yes, he is there!
Go, go,—no blood! no blood!—go, gentle Conrad!

Conrad. Farewell!

Auranthe. Farewell! For this Heaven
pardon you!

[*Exit* AURANTHE.

Conrad. If he survive one hour, then may I die
In unimagined tortures, or breathe through
A long life in the foulest sink o' the world!
He dies! 'Tis well she do not advertise
The caitiff of the cold steel at his back.

[*Exit* CONRAD.

Enter LUDOLPH *and Page.*

Ludolph. Miss'd the way, boy? Say not that on
your peril!

Page. Indeed, indeed I cannot trace them further.

Ludolph. Must I stop here? Here solitary die?
Stifled beneath the thick oppressive shade
Of these dull boughs,—this oven of dark thickets,—
Silent,—without revenge?—pshaw!—bitter end,—
A bitter death,—a suffocating death,—
A gnawing—silent—deadly, quiet death!
Escaped?—fled?—vanish'd? melted into air?

She 's gone! I cannot clutch her! no revenge!
A muffled death, ensnared in horrid silence!
Suck'd to my grave amid a dreamy calm!
O, where is that illustrious noise of war,
To smother up this sound of labouring breath,
This rustle of the trees!

[AURANTHE *shrieks at a distance.*

Page. My lord, a noise!
This way—hark!

Ludolph. Yes, yes! A hope! A music!
A glorious clamour! How I live again!

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*Another part of the Forest.*

Enter ALBERT (*wounded*).

Albert. Oh! for enough life to support me on
To Otho's feet!

Enter LUDOLPH.

Ludolph. Thrice villanous, stay there!
Tell me where that detested woman is,
Or this is through thee!

Albert. My good Prince, with me
The sword has done its worst; not without worst

Done to another,—Conrad has it home!
I see you know it all!

Ludolph. Where is his sister?

Enter AURANTHE.

Auranthe. Albert!

Ludolph. Ha! There! there!—He is the paramour!—
There—hug him—dying! O, thou innocence,
Shrine him and comfort him at his last gasp,
Kiss down his eyelids! Was he not thy love?
Wilt thou forsake him at his latest hour?
Keep fearful and aloof from his last gaze,
His most uneasy moments, when cold death
Stands with the door ajar to let him in?

Albert. O that that door with hollow slam would close
Upon me sudden! for I cannot meet,
In all the unknown chambers of the dead,
Such horrors!

Ludolph. Auranthe! what can he mean?
What horrors? Is it not a joyous time?
Am I not married to a paragon
"Of personal beauty and untainted soul?"
A blushing fair-eyed purity? A sylph,
Whose snowy timid hand has never sinn'd
Beyond a flower pluck'd, white as itself?

Albert, you do insult my bride—your mistress—
To talk of horrors on our wedding-night!

Albert. Alas! poor Prince, I would you knew my heart!
'Tis not so guilty—

Ludolph. Hear, he pleads not guilty!
You are not? or, if so, what matters it?
You have escaped me, free as the dusk air,
Hid in the forest, safe from my revenge;
I cannot catch you! You should laugh at me,
Poor cheated Ludolph! Make the forest hiss
With jeers at me! You tremble—faint at once,
You will come to again. O cockatrice,
I have you! Whither wander those fair eyes
To entice the devil to your help, that he
May change you to a spider, so to crawl
Into some cranny to escape my wrath?

Albert. Sometimes the counsel of a dying man
Doth operate quietly when his breath is gone:
Disjoin those hands—part—part—do not destroy
Each other—forget her!—Our miseries
Are equal shared, and mercy is—

Ludolph. A boon
When one can compass it. Auranthe, try
Your oratory; your breath is not so hitch'd.
Ay, stare for help!

[ALBERT *dies.*

There goes a spotted soul
Howling in vain along the hollow night!
Hear him! He calls you—sweet Auranthe, come!
Auranthe. Kill me!
Ludolph. No! What? Upon our marriage-night?
The earth would shudder at so foul a deed!
A fair bride! A sweet bride! An innocent bride!
No! we must revel it, as 'tis in use
In times of delicate brilliant ceremony:
Come, let me lead you to our halls again!
Nay, linger not; make no resistance, sweet;—
Will you? Ah, wretch, thou canst not, for I have
The strength of twenty lions 'gainst a lamb!
Now—one adieu for Albert!—Come away!

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*An inner Court of the Castle.*

Enter SIGIFRED, GONFRED, *and* THEODORE, *meeting.*

1*st Knight.* Was ever such a night?
Sigifred. What horrors more?
Things unbelieved one hour, so strange they are,
The next hour stamps with credit.
1*st Knight.* Your last news?

Gonfred. After the page's story of the death
Of Albert and Duke Conrad?

Sigifred. And the return
Of Ludolph with the Princess.

Gonfred. No more, save
Prince Gersa's freeing Abbot Ethelbert,
And the sweet lady, fair Erminia,
From prison.

1*st Knight.* Where are they now? Hast yet heard?

Gonfred. With the sad Emperor they are closeted;
I saw the three pass slowly up the stairs,
The lady weeping, the old abbot cowl'd.

Sigifred. What next?

1*st Knight.* I ache to think on't.

Gonfred. 'Tis with fate.

1*st Knight.* One while these proud towers are hush'd as death.

Gonfred. The next our poor Prince fills the arched rooms
With ghastly ravings.

Sigifred. I do fear his brain.

Gonfred. I will see more. Bear you so stout a heart?

[*Exeunt into the Castle.*

SCENE IV.—*A Cabinet, opening towards a Terrace.*

OTHO, ERMINIA, ETHELBERT, *and a Physician, discovered.*

Otho. O, my poor boy! My son! My son! My Ludolph!
Have ye no comfort for me, ye physicians
Of the weak body and soul?
Ethelbert. 'Tis not in medicine,
Either of heaven or earth, to cure, unless
Fit time be chosen to administer.
Otho. A kind forbearance, holy abbot. Come,
Erminia; here, sit by me, gentle girl;
Give me thy hand; hast thou forgiven me?
Erminia. Would I were with the saints to pray for you!
Otho. Why will ye keep me from my darling child?
Physician. Forgive me, but he must not see thy face.
Otho. Is then a father's countenance a Gorgon?
Hath it not comfort in it? Would it not
Console my poor boy, cheer him, heal his spirits?
Let me embrace him; let me speak to him;
I will! Who hinders me? Who 's Emperor?
Physician. You may not, Sire; 'twould overwhelm him quite,

He is so full of grief and passionate wrath;
Too heavy a sigh would kill him, or do worse.
He must be saved by fine contrivances;
And, most especially, we must keep clear
Out of his sight a father whom he loves;
His heart is full, it can contain no more,
And do its ruddy office.

Ethelbert. Sage advice;
We must endeavour how to ease and slacken
The tight-wound energies of his despair,
Not make them tenser.

Otho. Enough! I hear, I hear.
Yet you were about to advise more,—I listen.

Ethelbert. This learned doctor will agree with me,
That not in the smallest point should he be thwarted,
Or gainsaid by one word; his very motions,
Nods, becks, and hints, should be obey'd with care,
Even on the moment; so his troubled mind
May cure itself.

Physician. There are no other means.

Otho. Open the door; let 's hear if all is quiet.

Physician. Beseech you, Sire, forbear.

Erminia. Do, do.

Otho. I command!
Open it straight;—hush!—quiet!—my lost boy!
My miserable child!

Ludolph (*indistinctly without*). Fill, fill my goblet,
—here 's a health!

Erminia. O, close the door!

Otho. Let, let me hear his voice; this cannot last;
And fain would I catch up his dying words,
Though my own knell they be! This cannot last!
O let me catch his voice—for lo! I hear
A whisper in this silence that he 's dead!
It is so! Gersa?

Enter GERSA.

Physician. Say, how fares the prince?

Gersa. More calm; his features are less wild and flush'd;
Once he complain'd of weariness.

Physician. Indeed!
'Tis good,—'tis good; let him but fall asleep,
That saves him.

Otho. Gersa, watch him like a child;
Ward him from harm,—and bring me better news!

Physician. Humour him to the height. I fear to go;
For should he catch a glimpse of my dull garb,
It might affright him, fill him with suspicion
That we believe him sick, which must not be.

Gersa. I will invent what soothing means I can.
[*Exit* GERSA.

Physician. This should cheer up your Highness; weariness
Is a good symptom, and most favourable;
It gives me pleasant hopes. Please you, walk forth
Upon the terrace; the refreshing air
Will blow one half of your sad doubts away.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE V.—*A Banqueting Hall, brilliantly illuminated, and set forth with all costly magnificence, with Supper-tables, laden with services of Gold and Silver. A door in the back scene, guarded by two Soldiers. Lords, Ladies, Knights, Gentlemen, &c., whispering sadly, and ranging themselves; part entering and part discovered.*

1*st Knight.* Grievously are we tantalised, one and all;
Sway'd here and there, commanded to and fro,
As though we were the shadows of a sleep,
And link'd to a dreaming fancy. What do we here?

Gonfred. I am no seer; you know we must obey
The prince from A to Z, though it should be
To set the place in flames. I pray, hast heard
Where the most wicked Princess is?

1st Knight. There, sir,
In the next room; have you remark'd those two
Stout soldiers posted at the door?

Gonfred. For what?

[*They whisper.*

1st Lady. How ghast a train!

2nd Lady. Sure this should be some splendid burial.

1st Lady. What fearful whispering! See, see,—Gersa there!

Enter GERSA.

Gersa. Put on your brightest looks; smile if you can;
Behave as all were happy; keep your eyes
From the least watch upon him; if he speaks
To any one, answer, collectedly,
Without surprise, his questions, howe'er strange.
Do this to the utmost,—though, alas! with me
The remedy grows hopeless! Here he comes,—
Observe what I have said,—show no surprise.

Enter LUDOLPH, *followed by* SIGIFRED *and Page.*

Ludolph. A splendid company! rare beauties here!
I should have Orphean lips, and Plato's fancy,
Amphion's utterance, toned with his lyre,

Or the deep key of Jove's sonorous mouth,
To give fit salutation. Methought I heard,
As I came in, some whispers,—what of that?
'Tis natural men should whisper; at the kiss
Of Psyche given by Love, there was a buzz
Among the gods!—and silence is as natural.
These draperies are fine, and, being a mortal,
I should desire no better; yet, in truth,
There must be some superior costliness,
Some wider-domed high magnificence!
I would have, as a mortal I may not,
Hangings of heaven's clouds, purple and gold,
Slung from the spheres; gauzes of silver mist,
Loop'd up with cords of twisted wreathed light,
And tassell'd round with weeping meteors!
These pendent lamps and chandeliers are bright
As earthly fires from dull dross can be cleansed;
Yet could my eyes drink up intenser beams
Undazzled,—this is darkness,—when I close
These lids, I see far fiercer brilliances,—
Skies full of splendid moons, and shooting stars,
And spouting exhalations, diamond fires,
And panting fountains quivering with deep glows!
Yes—this is dark—is it not dark?

Sigifred. My Lord,
'Tis late; the lights of festival are ever
Quench'd in the morn.

Ludolph. 'Tis not to-morrow then?

Sigifred. 'Tis early dawn.

Gersa. Indeed full time we slept;
Say you so, Prince?

Ludolph. I say I quarrell'd with you;
We did not tilt each other,—that 's a blessing,—
Good gods! no innocent blood upon my head!

Sigifred. Retire, Gersa!

Ludolph. There should be three more here:
For two of them, they stay away perhaps,
Being gloomy-minded, haters of fair revels,—
They know their own thoughts best.
As for the third,
Deep blue eyes, semi-shaded in white lids,
Finish'd with lashes fine for more soft shade,
Completed by her twin-arch'd ebon-brows;
White temples, of exactest elegance,
Of even mould, felicitous and smooth;
Cheeks fashion'd tenderly on either side,
So perfect, so divine, that our poor eyes
Are dazzled with the sweet proportioning,
And wonder that 'tis so,—the magic chance!
Her nostrils, small, fragrant, fairy-delicate;
Her lips—I swear no human bones e'er wore
So taking a disguise;—you shall behold her!
We 'll have her presently; ay, you shall see her,
And wonder at her, friends, she is so fair;

She is the world's chief jewel, and, by heaven,
She 's mine by right of marriage !—she is mine !
Patience, good people, in fit time I send
A summoner,—she will obey my call,
Being a wife most mild and dutiful.
First I would hear what music is prepared
To herald and receive her; let me hear!

Sigifred. Bid the musicians soothe him tenderly.

[*A soft strain of Music.*

Ludolph. Ye have none better? No, I am content;
Tis a rich sobbing melody, with reliefs
Full and majestic; it is well enough,
And will be sweeter, when ye see her pace
Sweeping into this presence, glisten'd o'er
With emptied caskets, and her train upheld
By ladies, habited in robes of lawn,
Sprinkled with golden crescents, others bright
In silks, with spangles shower'd, and bow'd to
By Duchesses and pearled Margravines !
Sad, that the fairest creature of the earth—
I pray you mind me not—'tis sad, I say,
That the extremest beauty of the world
Should so entrench herself away from me,
Behind a barrier of engender'd guilt !

2nd Lady. Ah ! what a moan !

1st Knight. Most piteous indeed !

Ludolph. She shall be brought before this company,
And then—then—

1*st Lady.* He muses.

Gersa. O, Fortune, where will this end?

Sigifred. I guess his purpose! Indeed he must not have
That pestilence brought in,—that cannot be,
There we must stop him.

Gersa. I am lost! Hush, hush!
He is about to rave again.

Ludolph. A barrier of guilt! I was the fool,
She was the cheater! Who 's the cheater now,
And who the fool? The entrapp'd, the caged fool,
The bird-limed raven? She shall croak to death
Secure! Methinks I have her in my fist,
To crush her with my heel! Wait, wait! I marvel
My father keeps away. Good friend—ah! Sigifred?
Do bring him to me,—and Erminia,
I fain would see before I sleep—and Ethelbert,
That he may bless me, as I know he will,
Though I have cursed him.

Sigifred. Rather suffer me
To lead you to them.

Ludolph. No, excuse me,—no!
The day is not quite done. Go, bring them hither.

[*Exit* SIGIFRED.

Certes, a father's smile should, like sun light,
Slant on my sheaved harvest of ripe bliss.
Besides, I thirst to pledge my lovely bride
In a deep goblet: let me see—what wine?
The strong Iberian juice, or mellow Greek?
Or pale Calabrian? Or the Tuscan grape?
Or of old Ætna's pulpy wine-presses,
Black stain'd with the fat vintage, as it were
The purple slaughter-house, where Bacchus' self
Prick'd his own swollen veins! Where is my page?

Page. Here, here!

Ludolph. Be ready to obey me; anon thou shalt
Bear a soft message for me; for the hour
Draws near when I must make a winding up
Of bridal mysteries—a fine-spun vengeance!
Carve it on my tomb, that, when I rest beneath,
Men shall confess, this Prince was gull'd and cheated,
But from the ashes of disgrace he rose
More than a fiery dragon, and did burn
His ignominy up in purging fires!
Did I not send, sir, but a moment past,
For my father?

Gersa. You did.

Ludolph. Perhaps 'twould be
Much better he came not.

Gersa. He enters now!

Enter OTHO, ERMINIA, ETHELBERT, SIGIFRED, *and Physician.*

Ludolph. Oh! thou good man, against whose sacred head
I was a mad conspirator, chiefly too
For the sake of my fair newly wedded wife,
Now to be punish'd!—do not look so sad!
Those charitable eyes will thaw my heart,
Those tears will wash away a just resolve,
A verdict ten times sworn! Awake—awake—
Put on a judge's brow, and use a tongue
Made iron-stern by habit! Thou shalt see
A deed to be applauded, 'scribed in gold!
Join a loud voice to mine, and so denounce
What I alone will execute!

Otho. Dear son,
What is it? By your father's love, I sue
That it be nothing merciless!

Ludolph. To that demon?
Not so! No! She is in temple-stall
Being garnish'd for the sacrifice, and I,
The Priest of Justice, will immolate her
Upon the altar of wrath! She stings me through!—
Even as the worm doth feed upon the nut,

So she, a scorpion, preys upon my brain!
I feel her gnawing here! Let her but vanish,
Then, father, I will lead your legions forth,
Compact in steeled squares, and speared files,
And bid our trumpets speak a fell rebuke
To nations drowsed in peace!

Otho. To-morrow, son;
Be your word law; forget to-day—

Ludolph. I will
When I have finish'd it! Now,—now, I 'm pight,
Tight-footed for the deed!

Erminia. Alas! Alas!

Ludolph. What angel's voice is that? Erminia!
Ah! gentlest creature, whose sweet innocence
Was almost murder'd; I am penitent,
Wilt thou forgive me? And thou, holy man,
Good Ethelbert, shall I die in peace with you?

Erminia. Die, my lord!

Ludolph. I feel it possible.

Otho. Physician?

Physician. I fear me he is past my skill.

Otho. Not so!

Ludolph. I see it—I see it—I have been wandering!
Half mad—not right here—I forget my purpose.
Bestir—bestir—Auranthe! Ha! ha! ha!
Youngster! Page! go bid them drag her to me!

Obey! This shall finish it!

[*Draws a dagger.*

Otho. Oh, my son! my son!

Sigifred. This must not be—stop there!

Ludolph. Am I obey'd?

A little talk with her—no harm—haste! haste!

[*Exit Page.*

Set her before me—never fear I can strike.

Several Voices. My Lord! My Lord!

Gersa. Good Prince!

Ludolph. Why do ye trouble me? out—out—away!

There she is! take that! and that! no no,

That 's not well done.—Where is she?

[*The doors open. Enter Page. Several women are seen grouped about Auranthe in the inner-room.*

Page. Alas! My Lord, my Lord! they cannot move her!

Her arms are stiff,—her fingers clench'd and cold!

Ludolph. She 's dead!

[*Staggers and falls into their arms.*

Ethelbert. Take away the dagger.

Gersa. Softly; so!

Otho. Thank God for that!

Sigifred. It could not harm him now.

Gersa. No!—brief be his anguish!

Ludolph. She 's gone! I am content—Nobles,
good night!
We are all weary—faint—set ope the doors—
I will to bed!—To-morrow—

[*Dies.*

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

KING STEPHEN.

A Dramatic Fragment.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Field of Battle.*

Alarum. Enter King STEPHEN, *Knights, and Soldiers.*

Stephen. If shame can on a soldier's vein-swoll'n front
Spread deeper crimson than the battle's toil,
Blush in your casing helmets! for see, see!
Yonder my chivalry, my pride of war,
Wrench'd with an iron hand from firm array,
Are routed loose about the plashy meads,
Of honour forfeit. O, that my known voice
Could reach your dastard ears, and fright you more!
Fly, cowards, fly! Glocester is at your backs!
Throw your slack bridles o'er the flurried manes,
Ply well the rowel with faint trembling heels,
Scampering to death at last!

1st Knight. The enemy
Bears his flaunt standard close upon their rear.
2nd Knight. Sure of a bloody prey, seeing the fens
Will swamp them girth-deep.
Stephen. Over head and ears,
No matter! 'Tis a gallant enemy;
How like a comet he goes streaming on.
But we must plague him in the flank,—hey, friends?
We are well breath'd,—follow!

Enter Earl BALDWIN *and Soldiers, as defeated.*

Stephen. De Redvers!
What is the monstrous bugbear that can fright
Baldwin?
Baldwin. No scare-crow, but the fortunate star
Of boisterous Chester, whose fell truncheon now
Points level to the goal of victory.
This way he comes, and if you would maintain
Your person unaffronted by vile odds,
Take horse, my Lord.
Stephen. And which way spur for life?
Now I thank Heaven I am in the toils,
That soldiers may bear witness how my arm
Can burst the meshes. Not the eagle more
Loves to beat up against a tyrannous blast,
Than I to meet the torrent of my foes.
This is a brag,—be 't so,—but if I fall,

Carve it upon my 'scutcheon'd sepulchre.
On, fellow soldiers! Earl of Redvers, back!
Not twenty Earls of Chester shall brow-beat
The diadem.

[*Exeunt. Alarum.*

SCENE II.—*Another part of the Field.*

Trumpets sounding a Victory. Enter GLOCESTER, *Knights, and Forces.*

Glocester. Now may we lift our bruised visors up,
And take the flattering freshness of the air,
While the wide din of battle dies away
Into times past, yet to be echoed sure
In the silent pages of our chroniclers.

1*st Knight.* Will Stephen's death be mark'd there, my good Lord,
Or that we gave him lodging in yon towers?

Glocester. Fain would I know the great usurper's fate.

Enter two Captains severally.

1*st Captain.* My Lord!

2*nd Captain.* Most noble Earl!

1*st Captain.* The King—

2*nd Captain.* The Empress greets—

Glocester. What of the King?

1*st Captain.* He sole and lone maintains

A hopeless bustle 'mid our swarming arms,
And with a nimble savageness attacks,
Escapes, makes fiercer onset, then anew
Eludes death, giving death to most that dare
Trespass within the circuit of his sword!
He must by this have fallen. Baldwin is taken;
And for the Duke of Bretagne, like a stag
He flies, for the Welsh beagles to hunt down.
God save the Empress!

Glocester. Now our dreaded Queen:
What message from her Highness?

2nd Captain. Royal Maud
From the throng'd towers of Lincoln hath look'd down,
Like Pallas from the walls of Ilion,
And seen her enemies havock'd at her feet.
She greets most noble Glocester from her heart,
Intreating him, his captains, and brave knights,
To grace a banquet. The high city gates
Are envious which shall see your triumph pass;
The streets are full of music.

Enter 2nd Knight.

Glocester. Whence come you?

2nd Knight. From Stephen, my good Prince,—
Stephen! Stephen!

Glocester. Why do you make such echoing of his name?

2nd Knight. Because I think, my lord, he is no man,
But a fierce demon, 'nointed safe from wounds,
And misbaptised with a Christian name.

Glocester. A mighty soldier!—Does he still hold out?

2nd Knight. He shames our victory. His valour still
Keeps elbow-room amid our eager swords,
And holds our bladed falchions all aloof—
His gleaming battle-axe being slaughter-sick,
Smote on the morion of a Flemish knight,
Broke short in his hand; upon the which he flung
The heft away with such a vengeful force,
It paunch'd the Earl of Chester's horse, who then
Spleen-hearted came in full career at him.

Glocester. Did no one take him at a vantage then?

2nd Knight. Three then with tiger leap upon him flew,
Whom, with his sword swift-drawn and nimbly held,
He stung away again, and stood to breathe,
Smiling. Anon upon him rush'd once more
A throng of foes, and in this renew'd strife,
My sword met his and snapp'd off at the hilt.

Glocester. Come, lead me to this man—and let us move
In silence, not insulting his sad doom

With clamorous trumpets. To the Empress bear
My salutation as befits the time.

[*Exeunt* GLOCESTER *and Forces.*

SCENE III.—*The Field of Battle. Enter* STEPHEN *unarmed.*

Stephen. Another sword! And what if I could seize
One from Bellona's gleaming armoury,
Or choose the fairest of her sheaved spears!
Where are my enemies? Here, close at hand,
Here come the testy brood. O, for a sword!
I 'm faint—a biting sword! A noble sword!
A hedge-stake—or a ponderous stone to hurl
With brawny vengeance, like the labourer Cain.
Come on! Farewell my kingdom, and all hail
Thou superb, plumed, and helmeted renown,
All hail—I would not truck this brilliant day
To rule in Pylos with a Nestor's beard—
Come on!

Enter DE KAIMS *and Knights, &c.*

De Kaims. Is 't madness or a hunger after death
That makes thee thus unarm'd throw taunts at us?—
Yield, Stephen, or my sword's point dips in
The gloomy current of a traitor's heart.

Stephen. Do it, De Kaims, I will not budge an inch.

De Kaims. Yes, of thy madness thou shalt take the meed.

Stephen. Darest thou?

De Kaims. How dare, against a man disarm'd?

Stephen. What weapons has the lion but himself?
Come not near me, De Kaims, for by the price
Of all the glory I have won this day,
Being a king, I will not yield alive
To any but the second man of the realm,
Robert of Glocester.

De Kaims. Thou shalt vail to me.

Stephen. Shall I, when I have sworn against it, sir?
Thou think'st it brave to take a breathing king,
That, on a court-day bow'd to haughty Maud,
The awed presence-chamber may be bold
To whisper, there 's the man who took alive
Stephen—me—prisoner. Certes, De Kaims,
The ambition is a noble one.

De Kaims. 'Tis true,
And, Stephen, I must compass it.

Stephen. No, no,
Do not tempt me to throttle you on the gorge,
Or with my gauntlet crush your hollow breast,
Just when your knighthood is grown ripe and full
For lordship.

A Soldier. Is an honest yeoman's spear

Of no use at a need? Take that.

Stephen. Ah, dastard!

De Kaims. What, you are vulnerable! my prisoner!

Stephen. No, not yet. I disclaim it, and demand
Death as a sovereign right unto a king
Who 'sdains to yield to any but his peer,
If not in title, yet in noble deeds,
The Earl of Glocester. Stab to the hilt, De Kaims,
For I will never by mean hands be led
From this so famous field. Do you hear! Be quick!

Trumpets. Enter the Earl of CHESTER *and Knights.*

SCENE IV.—*A Presence Chamber. Queen* MAUD *in a Chair of State, the Earls of* GLOCESTER *and* CHESTER, *Lords, Attendants.*

Maud. Glocester, no more: I will behold that Boulogne:
Set him before me. Not for the poor sake
Of regal pomp and a vain-glorious hour,
As thou with wary speech, yet near enough,
Hast hinted.

Glocester. Faithful counsel have I given;
If wary, for your Highness' benefit.

Maud. The Heavens forbid that I should not think so,

For by thy valour have I won this realm,
Which by thy wisdom I will ever keep.
To sage advisers let me ever bend
A meek attentive ear, so that they treat
Of the wide kingdom's rule and government,
Not trenching on our actions personal.
Advised, not school'd, I would be; and henceforth
Spoken to in clear, plain, and open terms,
Not side-ways sermon'd at.

Glocester. Then in plain terms,
Once more for the fallen king—

Maud. Your pardon, Brother,
I would no more of that; for, as I said,
'Tis not for worldly pomp I wish to see
The rebel, but as dooming judge to give
A sentence something worthy of his guilt.

Glocester. If 't must be so, I 'll bring him to your presence.

[*Exit* GLOCESTER.

Maud. A meaner summoner might do as well—
My Lord of Chester, is 't true what I hear
Of Stephen of Boulogne, our prisoner,
That he, as a fit penance for his crimes,
Eats wholesome, sweet, and palatable food
Off Glocester's golden dishes—drinks pure wine,
Lodges soft?

Chester. More than that, my gracious Queen,

Has anger'd me. The noble Earl, methinks,
Full soldier as he is, and without peer
In counsel, dreams too much among his books.
It may read well, but sure 'tis out of date
To play the Alexander with Darius.

Maud. Truth! I think so. By Heavens it shall not last!

Chester. It would amaze your Highness now to mark
How Glocester overstrains his courtesy
To that crime-loving rebel, that Boulogne—

Maud. That ingrate!

Chester. For whose vast ingratitude
To our late sovereign lord, your noble sire,
The generous Earl condoles in his mishaps,
And with a sort of lackeying friendliness,
Talks off the mighty frowning from his brow,
Woos him to hold a duet in a smile,
Or, if it please him, play an hour at chess—

Maud. A perjured slave!

Chester. And for his perjury,
Glocester has fit rewards—nay, I believe,
He sets his bustling household's wits at work
For flatteries to ease this Stephen's hours,
And make a heaven of his purgatory;
Adorning bondage with the pleasant gloss
Of feasts and music, and all idle shows
Of indoor pageantry; while syren whispers,

Predestined for his ear, 'scape as half-check'd
From lips the courtliest and the rubiest,
Of all the realm, admiring of his deeds.
Maud. A frost upon his summer!
Chester. A queen's nod
Can make his June December. Here he comes.

* * * *

THE CAP AND BELLS;*

Or, the Jealousies.

A FAËRY TALE. UNFINISHED.

I.

In midmost Ind, beside Hydaspes cool,
There stood, or hover'd, tremulous in the air,
A faery city, 'neath the potent rule
Of Emperor Elfinan; famed ev'rywhere
For love of mortal women, maidens fair,
Whose lips were solid, whose soft hands were made
Of a fit mould and beauty, ripe and rare,
To pamper his slight wooing, warm yet staid:
He lov'd girls smooth as shades, but hated a mere shade.

II.

This was a crime forbidden by the law;
And all the priesthood of his city wept,
For ruin and dismay they well foresaw,
If impious prince no bound or limit kept,

* This Poem was written subject to future amendments and omissions: it was begun without a plan, and without any prescribed laws for the supernatural machinery.—Charles Brown.

And faery Zendervester overstept;
They wept, he sinn'd, and still he would sin on,
They dreamt of sin, and he sinn'd while they slept;
In vain the pulpit thunder'd at the throne,
Caricature was vain, and vain the tart lampoon.

III.

Which seeing, his high court of parliament
Laid a remonstrance at his Highness' feet,
Praying his royal senses to content
Themselves with what in faery land was sweet,
Befitting best that shade with shade should meet:
Whereat, to calm their fears, he promised soon
From mortal tempters all to make retreat,—
Aye, even on the first of the new moon,
An immaterial wife to espouse as heaven's boon.

IV.

Meantime he sent a fluttering embassy
To Pigmio, of Imaus sovereign,
To half beg, and half demand, respectfully,
The hand of his fair daughter Bellanaine;
An audience had, and speeching done, they gain
Their point, and bring the weeping bride away;
Whom, with but one attendant, safely lain
Upon their wings, they bore in bright array,
While little harps were touch'd by many a lyric fay.

V.

As in old pictures tender cherubim
A child's soul thro' the sapphired canvas bear,
So, thro' a real heaven, on they swim
With the sweet princess on her plumaged lair,
Speed giving to the winds her lustrous hair;
And so she journey'd, sleeping or awake,
Save when, for healthful exercise and air,
She chose to "promener à l'aile," or take
A pigeon's somerset, for sport or change's sake

VI.

"Dear princess, do not whisper me so loud,"
Quoth Corallina, nurse and confidant,
"Do not you see there, lurking in a cloud,
Close at your back, that sly old Crafticant?
He hears a whisper plainer than a rant:
Dry up your tears, and do not look so blue;
He 's Elfinan's great state-spy militant,
His running, lying, flying foot-man too,—
Dear mistress, let him have no handle against you!

VII.

"Show him a mouse's tail, and he will guess,
With metaphysic swiftness, at the mouse;
Show him a garden, and with speed no less,
He 'll surmise sagely of a dwelling-house,
And plot, in the same minute, how to chouse

The owner out of it; show him a —" "Peace!
Peace! nor contrive thy mistress' ire to rouse;"
Return'd the princess, "my tongue shall not cease
Till from this hated match I get a free release.

VIII.

"Ah, beauteous mortal!" "Hush!" quoth Coral-
line,
"Really you must not talk of him, indeed."
"You hush!" replied the mistress, with a shine
Of anger in her eyes, enough to breed
In stouter hearts than nurse's fear and dread:
'Twas not the glance itself made nursey flinch,
But of its threat she took the utmost heed;
Not liking in her heart an hour-long pinch,
Or a sharp needle run into her back an inch.

IX.

So she was silenced, and fair Bellanaine,
Writhing her little body with ennui,
Continued to lament and to complain,
That Fate, cross-purposing, should let her be
Ravish'd away far from her dear countree;
That all her feelings should be set at nought,
In trumping up this match so hastily,
With lowland blood; and lowland blood she thought
Poison, as every staunch true-born Imaian ought.

X.

Sorely she grieved, and wetted three or four
White Provençe rose-leaves with her faery tears,
But not for this cause;—alas! she had more
Bad reasons for her sorrow, as appears
In the famed memoirs of a thousand years,
Written by Crafticant, and published
By Parpaglion and Co., (those sly compeers
Who raked up ev'ry fact against the dead,)
In Scarab Street, Panthea, at the Jubal's Head.

XI.

Where, after a long hypercritic howl
Against the vicious manners of the age,
He goes on to expose, with heart and soul,
What vice in this or that year was the rage,
Backbiting all the world in ev'ry page;
With special strictures on the horrid crime,
(Section'd and subsection'd with learning sage,)
Of faeries stooping on their wings sublime
To kiss a mortal's lips, when such were in their prime.

XII.

Turn to the copious index, you will find
Somewhere in the column, headed letter B.,
The name of Bellanaine, if you 're not blind;
Then pray refer to the text, and you will see
An article made up of calumny

Against this highland princess, rating her
For giving way, so over fashionably,
To this new-fangled vice, which seems a burr
Stuck in his moral throat, no coughing e'er could stir.

XIII.

There he says plainly that she loved a man!
That she around him flutter'd, flirted, toy'd,
Before her marriage with great Elfinan;
That after marriage too, she never joy'd
In husband's company, but still employ'd
Her wits to 'scape away to Angle-land;
Where liv'd the youth, who worried and annoy'd
Her tender heart, and its warm ardours fann'd
To such a dreadful blaze, her side would scorch her hand.

XIV.

But let us leave this idle tittle tattle
To waiting-maids, and bed-room coteries,
Nor till fit time against her fame wage battle.
Poor Elfinan is very ill at ease,
Let us resume his subject if you please:
For it may comfort and console him much,
To rhyme and syllable his miseries;
Poor Elfinan! whose cruel fate was such,
He sat and cursed a bride he knew he could not touch.

XV.

Soon as (according to his promises)
The bridal embassy had taken wing,
And vanish'd, bird-like, o'er the suburb trees,
The Emperor, empierced with the sharp sting
Of love, retired, vex'd and murmuring
Like any drone shut from the fair bee-queen,
Into his cabinet, and there did fling
His limbs upon a sofa, full of spleen,
And damn'd his House of Commons, in complete chagrin.

XVI.

"I 'll trounce some of the members," cried the prince,
"I 'll put a mark against some rebel names,
I 'll make the opposition-benches wince,
I 'll show them very soon, to all their shames,
What 'tis to smother up a prince's flames;
That ministers should join in it, I own,
Surprises me!—they too at these high games!
Am I an Emperor? Do I wear a crown?
Imperial Elfinan, go hang thyself or drown!

XVII.

"I 'll trounce 'em!—there's the square-cut chancellor,
His son shall never touch that bishopric;
And for the nephew of old Palfior,
I 'll show him that his speeches made me sick,
And give the colonelcy to Phalaric;

The tiptoe marquis, moral and gallant,
Shall lodge in shabby taverns upon tick;
And for the Speaker's second cousin's aunt,
She sha'n't be maid of honour,—by heaven that she sha'n't!

XVIII.

"I 'll shirk the Duke of A.; I 'll cut his brother;
I 'll give no garter to his eldest son;
I won't speak to his sister or his mother!
The Viscount B. shall live at cut-and-run;
But how in the world can I contrive to stun
That fellow's voice, which plagues me worse than any,
That stubborn fool, that impudent state-dun,
Who sets down ev'ry sovereign as a zany,—
That vulgar commoner, Esquire Biancopany?

XIX.

"Monstrous affair! Pshaw! pah! what ugly minx
Will they fetch from Imaus for my bride?
Alas! my wearied heart within me sinks,
To think that I must be so near allied
To a cold dullard fay,—ah, woe betide!
Ah, fairest of all human loveliness!
Sweet Bertha! what crime can it be to glide
About the fragrant plaitings of thy dress,
Or kiss thine eyes, or count thy locks, tress after tress?"

XX.

So said, one minute's while his eyes remain'd
Half lidded, piteous, languid, innocent;
But, in a wink, their splendour they regain'd,
Sparkling revenge with amorous fury blent.
Love thwarted in bad temper oft has vent:
He rose, he stampt his foot, he rang the bell,
And order'd some death-warrants to be sent
For signature:—somewhere the tempest fell,
As many a poor fellow does not live to tell.

XXI.

"At the same time, Eban,"—(this was his page,
A fay of colour, slave from top to toe,
Sent as a present, while yet under age,
From the Viceroy of Zanguebar,—wise, slow,
His speech, his only words were "yes" and "no,"
But swift of look, and foot, and wing was he,)—
"At the same time, Eban, this instant go
To Hum the soothsayer, whose name I see
Among the fresh arrivals in our empery.

XXII.

"Bring Hum to me! But stay—here take my ring,
The pledge of favour, that he not suspect
Any foul play, or awkward murdering,
Tho' I have bowstrung many of his sect;
Throw in a hint, that if he should neglect

One hour, the next shall see him in my grasp,
And the next after that shall see him neck'd,
Or swallow'd by my hunger-starved asp,—
And mention ('tis as well) the torture of the wasp."

XXIII.

These orders given, the Prince, in half a pet,
Let o'er the silk his propping elbow slide,
Caught up his little legs, and, in a fret,
Fell on the sofa on his royal side.
The slave retreated backwards, humble-eyed,
And with a slave-like silence closed the door,
And to old Hum thro' street and alley hied;
He "knew the city," as we say, of yore,
And for short cuts and turns, was nobody knew more.

XXIV.

It was the time when wholesale dealers close
Their shutters with a moody sense of wealth,
But retail dealers, diligent, let loose
The gas (objected to on score of health),
Convey'd in little solder'd pipes by stealth,
And make it flare in many a brilliant form,
That all the powers of darkness it repell'th,
Which to the oil-trade doth great scaith and harm,
And supersedeth quite the use of the glow-worm.

XXV.

Eban, untempted by the pastry-cooks,
(Of pastry he got store within the palace,)
With hasty steps, wrapp'd cloak, and solemn looks,
Incognito upon his errand sallies,
His smelling-bottle ready for the allies;
He pass'd the hurdy-gurdies with disdain,
Vowing he 'd have them sent on board the gallies;
Just as he made his vow, it 'gan to rain,
Therefore he call'd a coach, and bade it drive amain.

XXVI.

"I 'll pull the string," said he, and further said,
"Polluted jarvey! Ah, thou filthy hack!
Whose springs of life are all dried up and dead,
Whose linsey-wolsey lining hangs all slack,
Whose rug is straw, whose wholeness is a crack;
And evermore thy steps go clatter-clitter;
Whose glass once up can never be got back,
Who prov'st, with jolting arguments and bitter,
That 'tis of modern use to travel in a litter.

XXVII.

"Thou inconvenience! thou hungry crop
For all corn! thou snail-creeper to and fro,
Who while thou goest ever seem'st to stop,
And fiddle-faddle standest while you go;
I' the morning, freighted with a weight of woe,

Unto some lazar-house thou journeyest,
And in the evening tak'st a double row
Of dowdies, for some dance or party drest,
Besides the goods meanwhile thou movest east and west.

XXVIII.

"By thy ungallant bearing and sad mien,
An inch appears the utmost thou couldst budge;
Yet at the slightest nod, or hint, or sign,
Round to the curb-stone patient dost thou trudge,
School'd in a beckon, learned in a nudge,
A dull-eyed Argus watching for a fare;
Quiet and plodding thou dost bear no grudge
To whisking tilburies, or phaetons rare,
Curricles, or mail-coaches, swift beyond compare."

XXIX.

Philosophising thus, he pull'd the check,
And bade the coachman wheel to such a street,
Who turning much his body, more his neck,
Louted full low, and hoarsely did him greet:
"Certes, Monsieur were best take to his feet,
Seeing his servant can no further drive
For press of coaches, that to-night here meet,
Many as bees about a straw-capp'd hive,
When first for April honey into faint flowers they dive."

XXX.

Eban then paid his fare, and tiptoe went
To Hum's hotel; and, as he on did pass
With head inclined, each dusky lineament
Show'd in the pearl-paved street, as in a glass;
His purple vest, that ever peeping was
Rich from the fluttering crimson of his cloak,
His silvery trowsers, and his silken sash
Tied in a burnish'd knot, their semblance took
Upon the mirror'd walls, wherever he might look.

XXXI.

He smiled at self, and, smiling, show'd his teeth,
And seeing his white teeth, he smiled the more;
Lifted his eye-brows, spurn'd the path beneath,
Show'd teeth again, and smiled as heretofore,
Until he knock'd at the magician's door;
Where, till the porter answer'd, might be seen,
In the clear panel more he could adore,—
His turban wreath'd of gold, and white, and green,
Mustachios, ear-ring, nose-ring, and his sabre keen.

XXXII.

"Does not your master give a rout to-night?"
Quoth the dark page; "Oh, no!" return'd the Swiss,
"Next door but one to us, upon the right,
The *Mayazin des Modes* now open is
Against the Emperor's wedding;—and sir, this

My master finds a monstrous horrid bore;
As he retired, an hour ago I wis,
With his best beard and brimstone, to explore
And cast a quiet figure in his second floor.

XXXIII.

"Gad! he 's obliged to stick to business!
For chalk, I hear, stands at a pretty price;
And as for aqua vitæ—there 's a mess!
The *dentes sapientiæ* of mice
Our barber tells me too are on the rise,—
Tinder 's a lighter article,—nitre pure
Goes off like lightning,—grains of Paradise
At an enormous figure!—stars not sure!—
Zodiac will not move without a slight douceur!

XXXIV.

"Venus won't stir a peg without a fee,
And master is too partial *entre nous*
To—" "Hush—hush!" cried Eban, "sure that is he
Coming down stairs,—by St. Bartholomew!
As backwards as he can,—is't something new?
Or is't his custom, in the name of fun?"
"He always comes down backward, with one shoe"—
Return'd the porter—"off, and one shoe on,
Like, saving shoe for sock or stocking, my man John!"

XXXV.

It was indeed the great Magician,
Feeling, with careful toe, for every stair,
And retrograding careful as he can,
Backwards and downwards from his own two pair:
"Salpietro!" exclaim'd Hum, "is the dog there?
He 's always in my way upon the mat!"
"He 's in the kitchen, or the Lord knows where,"—
Replied the Swiss,—"the nasty, whelping brat!"
"Don't beat him!" return'd Hum, and on the floor
came pat.

XXXVI.

Then facing right about, he saw the Page,
And said: "Don't tell me what you want, Eban;
The Emperor is now in a huge rage,—
'Tis nine to one he 'll give you the rattan!
Let us away!" Away together ran
The plain-dress'd sage and spangled blackamoor,
Nor rested till they stood to cool, and fan,
And breathe themselves at th' Emperor's chamber door,
When Eban thought he heard a soft imperial snore.

XXXVII.

"I thought you guess'd, foretold, or prophesied,
That 's Majesty was in a raving fit."
"He dreams," said Hum, "or I have ever lied,
That he is tearing you, sir, bit by bit."

"He 's not asleep, and you have little wit,"
Replied the Page, "that little buzzing noise,
Whate'er your palmistry may make of it,
Comes from a play-thing of the Emperor's choice,
From a Man-Tiger-Organ, prettiest of his toys."

XXXVIII.

Eban then usher'd in the learned Seer:
Elfinan's back was turn'd, but, ne'ertheless,
Both, prostrate on the carpet, ear by ear,
Crept silently, and waited in distress,
Knowing the Emperor's moody bitterness;
Eban especially, who on the floor 'gan
Tremble and quake to death,—he feared less
A dose of senna-tea, or nightmare Gorgon,
Than the Emperor when he play'd on his Man-Tiger-Organ.

XXXIX.

They kiss'd nine times the carpet's velvet face
Of glossy silk, soft, smooth, and meadow-green,
Where the close eye in deep rich fur might trace
A silver tissue, scantly to be seen,
As daisies lurk'd in June-grass, buds in green;
Sudden the music ceased, sudden the hand
Of majesty, by dint of passion keen,
Doubled into a common fist, went grand,
And knock'd down three cut glasses, and his best ink-stand.

XL.

Then turning round, he saw those trembling two:
"Eban," said he, "as slaves should taste the fruits
Of diligence, I shall remember you
To-morrow, or next day, as time suits,
In a finger conversation with my mutes,—
Begone!—for you, Chaldean! here remain;
Fear not, quake not, and as good wine recruits
A conjurer's spirits, what cup will you drain?
Sherry in silver, hock in gold, or glass'd champagne?"

XLI.

"Commander of the faithful!" answer'd Hum,
"In preference to these, I'll merely taste
A thimble-full of old Jamaica rum."
"A simple boon!" said Elfinan, "thou may'st
Have Nantz, with which my morning-coffee's laced."*
"I'll have a glass of Nantz, then,"—said the Seer,—
"Made racy—(sure my boldness is misplaced!)—
With the third part—(yet that is drinking dear!)—
Of the least drop of *crème de citron* crystal clear."

* "Mr. Nisby is of opinion that laced coffee is bad for the head." *Spectator.*

XLII.

"I pledge you, Hum! and pledge my dearest love,
My Bertha!" "Bertha! Bertha!" cried the sage,
"I know a many Bertha's!" "Mine 's above
All Bertha's!" sighed the Emperor. "I engage,"
Said Hum, "in duty, and in vassalage,
To mention all the Bertha's in the earth;—
There 's Bertha Watson,—and Miss Bertha Page,—
This famed for languid eyes, and that for mirth,—
There 's Bertha Blount of York,—and Bertha Knox of Perth."

XLIII.

"You seem to know"—"I do know," answer'd Hum,
"Your Majesty 's in love with some fine girl
Named Bertha; but her surname will not come,
Without a little conjuring." "Tis Pearl,
Tis Bertha Pearl! What makes my brains so whirl?
And she is softer, fairer than her name!"
"Where does she live?" ask'd Hum. "Her fair locks curl
So brightly, they put all our fays to shame!—
Live!—O! at Canterbury, with her old grand-dame."

XLIV.

"Good! good!" cried Hum, "I 've known her from
a child!
She is a changeling of my management;
She was born at midnight in an Indian wild;
Her mother's screams with the striped tiger's
blent,
While the torch-bearing slaves a halloo sent
Into the jungles; and her palanquin,
Rested amid the desert's drearment,
Shook with her agony, till fair were seen
The little Bertha's eyes ope on the stars serene."

XLV.

"I can't say," said the monarch, "that may be
Just as it happen'd, true or else a bam!
Drink up your brandy, and sit down by me,
Feel, feel my pulse, how much in love I am;
And if your science is not all a sham,
Tell me some means to get the lady here."
"Upon my honour!" said the son of Cham,*
"She is my dainty changeling, near and dear,
Although her story sounds at first a little queer."

* Cham is said to have been the inventor of magic. Lucy learnt this from Bayle's Dictionary, and had copied a long Latin note from that work.

XLVI.

"Convey her to me, Hum, or by my crown,
My sceptre, and my cross-surmounted globe,
I 'll knock you—" "Does your majesty mean—
down?
No, no, you never could my feelings probe
To such a depth!" The Emperor took his robe,
And wept upon its purple palatine,
While Hum continued, shamming half a sob,—
"In Canterbury doth your lady shine?
But let me cool your brandy with a little wine."

XLVII.

Whereat a narrow Flemish glass he took,
That since belong'd to Admiral De Witt,
Admired it with a connoisseuring look,
And with the ripest claret crowned it,
And, ere the lively bead could burst and flit,
He turned it quickly, nimbly upside down,
His mouth being held conveniently fit
To catch the treasure: "Best in all the town!"
He said, smack'd his moist lips, and gave a pleasant
frown.

XLVIII.

"Ah! good my Prince, weep not!" And then again
He fill'd a bumper. "Great sire, do not weep!
Your pulse is shocking, but I 'll ease your pain."
Fetch me that Ottoman, and prithee keep

Your voice low," said the Emperor, "and steep
Some lady's fingers nice in Candy wine;
And prithee, Hum, behind the screen do peep
For the rose-water vase, magician mine!
And sponge my forehead,—so my love doth make
me pine."

XLIX.

"Ah, cursed Bellanaine!" "Don't think of her,"
Rejoin'd the Mago, "but on Bertha muse;
For, by my choicest best barometer,
You shall not throttled be in marriage noose;
I 've said it, sire; you only have to choose
Bertha or Bellanaine." So saying, he drew
From the left pocket of his threadbare hose,
A sampler hoarded slyly, good as new,
Holding it by his thumb and finger full in view.

L.

"Sire, this is Bertha Pearl's neat handy-work,
Her *name*, see here, *Midsummer, ninety-one.*"
Elfinan snatch'd it with a sudden jerk,
And wept as if he never would have done,
Honouring with royal tears the poor homespun;
Whereon were broider'd tigers with black eyes,
And long-tail'd pheasants, and a rising sun,
Plenty of posies, great stags, butterflies
Bigger than stags,—a moon,—with other mysteries.

LI.

The monarch handled o'er and o'er again
These day-school hieroglyphics with a sigh;
Somewhat in sadness, but pleas'd in the main,
Till this oracular couplet met his eye
Astounded,—*Cupid, I do thee defy!*
It was too much. He shrunk back in his chair,
Grew pale as death, and fainted—very nigh!
"Pho! nonsense!" exclaim'd Hum, "now don't
despair:
She does not mean it really. Cheer up, hearty—there!

LII.

"And listen to my words. You say you won't,
On any terms, marry Miss Bellanaine;
It goes against your conscience—good! Well, don't.
You say, you love a mortal. I would fain
Persuade your honour's highness to refrain
From peccadilloes. But, sire, as I say,
What good would that do? And, to be more plain,
You would do me a mischief some odd day,
Cut off my ears and hands, or head too, by my fay!

LIII.

"Besides, manners forbid that I should pass any
Vile strictures on the conduct of a prince
Who should indulge his genius, if he has any,
Not, like a subject, foolish matters mince.

Now I think on't, perhaps I could convince
Your majesty there is no crime at all
In loving pretty little Bertha, since
She 's very delicate,—not over tall,—
A fairy's hand, and in the waist why—very small."

LIV.

"Ring the repeater, gentle Hum!" "'Tis five,"
Said gentle Hum; "the nights draw in apace;
The little birds I hear are all alive;
I see the dawning touch'd upon your face;
Shall I put out the candles, please your Grace?"
"Do put them out, and, without more ado,
Tell me how I may that sweet girl embrace,—
How you can bring her to me." "That 's for you,
Great Emperor! to adventure, like a lover true."

LV.

"I fetch her!"—"Yes, an't like your majesty;
And as she would be frighten'd wide awake,
To travel such a distance through the sky,
Use of some soft manœuvre you must make,
For your convenience, and her dear nerves' sake;
Nice way would be to bring her in a swoon,
Anon, I 'll tell what course were best to take;
You must away this morning." "Hum! so soon?"
"Sire, you must be in Kent by twelve o'clock at noon."

LVI.

At this great Cæsar started on his feet,
Lifted his wings, and stood attentive-wise.
"Those wings to Canterbury you must beat,
If you hold Bertha as a worthy prize,
Look in the Almanack—*Moore* never lies—
April the twenty-fourth,—this coming day,
Now breathing its new bloom upon the skies,
Will end in St. Mark's eve;—you must away,
For on that eve alone can you the maid convey."

LVII.

Then the magician solemnly 'gan to frown,
So that his frost-white eyebrows, beetling low,
Shaded his deep green eyes, and wrinkles brown
Plaited upon his furnace-scorched brow:
Forth from his hood that hung his neck below,
He lifted a bright casket of pure gold,
Touch'd a spring-lock, and there in wool or snow,
Charm'd into ever freezing, lay an old
And legend-leaved book, mysterious to behold.

LVIII.

"Take this same book,—it will not bite you, sire;
There, put it underneath your royal arm;
Though it 's a pretty weight, it will not tire,
But rather on your journey keep you warm:
This is the magic, this the potent charm,

That shall drive Bertha to a fainting fit!
When the time comes, don't feel the least alarm,
But lift her from the ground, and swiftly flit
Back to your palace. * * *

LIX.

"What shall I do with that same book?" "Why merely
Lay it on Bertha's table, close beside
Her work-box, and 'twill help your purpose dearly;
I say no more." "Or good or ill betide,
Through the wide air to Kent this morn I glide!"
Exclaim'd the Emperor, "When I return,
Ask what you will,—I 'll give you my new bride!
And take some more wine, Hum;—O, Heavens! I burn
To be upon the wing! Now, now, that minx I spurn!"

LX.

"Leave her to me," rejoin'd the magian:
"But how shall I account, illustrious fay!
For thine imperial absence? Pho! I can
Say you are very sick, and bar the way
To your so loving courtiers for one day;
If either of their two Archbishops' graces
Should talk of extreme unction, I shall say
You do not like cold pig with Latin phrases,
Which never should be used but in alarming cases."

LXI.

"Open the window, Hum; I 'm ready now!"
"Zooks!" exclaim'd Hum, as up the sash he drew,
"Behold, your majesty, upon the brow
Of yonder hill, what crowds of people!" "Where?
The monster 's always after something new,"
Return'd his highness, "they are piping hot
To see my pigsney Bellanaine. Hum! do
Tighten my belt a little,—so, so,—not
Too tight,—the book!—my wand!—so, nothing is
forgot."

LXII.

"Wounds! how they shout!" said Hum, "and
there,—see, see,
Th' ambassador 's return'd from Pigmio!
The morning 's very fine,—uncommonly!
See, past the skirts of yon white cloud they go,
Tinging it with soft crimsons! Now below
The sable-pointed heads of firs and pines
They dip, move on, and with them moves a glow
Along the forest side! Now amber lines
Reach the hill top, and now throughout the valley
shines."

LXIII.

"Why, Hum, you 're getting quite poetical!
Those *nows* you managed in a special style."
"If ever you have leisure, sire, you shall
See scraps of mine will make it worth your while,

Tit-bits for Phœbus !—yes, you well may smile.
Hark ! hark ! the bells ! " " A little further yet,
Good Hum, and let me view this mighty coil."
Then the great Emperor full graceful set
His elbow for a prop, and snuff'd his mignionette."

LXIV.

The morn is full of holiday ; loud bells
With rival clamours ring from every spire ;
Cunningly-station'd music dies and swells
In echoing places ; when the winds respire,
Light flags stream out like gauzy tongues of fire ;
A metropolitan murmur, lifeful, warm,
Comes from the northern suburbs ; rich attire
Freckles with red and gold the moving swarm ;
While here and there clear trumpets blow a keen
alarm.

LXV.

And now the fairy escort was seen clear,
Like the old pageant of Aurora's train,
Above a pearl-built minster, hovering near ;
First wily Crafticant, the chamberlain,
Balanced upon his grey-grown pinions twain,
His slender wand officially reveal'd ;
Then black gnomes scattering sixpences like rain ;
Then pages three and three ; and next, slave-held,
The Imaian 'scutcheon bright,—one mouse in argent
field.

LXVI.

Gentlemen pensioners next; and after them,
A troop of winged Janizaries flew;
Then slaves, as presents bearing many a gem;
Then twelve physicians fluttering two and two;
And next a chaplain in a cassock new;
Then Lords in waiting; then (what head not reels
For pleasure?)—the fair Princess in full view,
Borne upon wings,—and very pleased she feels
To have such splendour dance attendance at her heels.

LXVII.

For there was more magnificence behind:
She waved her handkerchief. "Ah, very grand!"
Cried Elfinan, and closed the window-blind;
"And, Hum, we must not shilly-shally stand,—
Adieu! adieu! I 'm off for Angle-land!
I say, old Hocus, have you such a thing
About you,—feel your pockets, I command,—
I want, this instant, an invisible ring,—
Thank you, old mummy!—now securely I take wing."

LXVIII.

Then Elfinan swift vaulted from the floor,
And lighted graceful on the window-sill;
Under one arm the magic book he bore,
The other he could wave about at will;
Pale was his face, he still look'd very ill:

He bow'd at Bellanaine, and said—" Poor Bell!
Farewell! farewell! and if for ever! still
For ever fare thee well! "—and then he fell
A laughing!—snapp'd his fingers!—shame it is
to tell!

LXIX.

" By'r Lady! he is gone! " cries Hum, " and I,—
(I own it,)—have made too free with his wine;
Old Crafticant will smoke me, by-the-bye!
This room is full of jewels as a mine,—
Dear valuable creatures, how ye shine!
Sometime to-day I must contrive a minute,
If Mercury propitiously incline,
To examine his scrutoire, and see what 's in it,
For of superfluous diamonds I as well may thin it.

LXX.

" The Emperor 's horrid bad; yes, that 's my cue! "
Some histories say that this was Hum's last speech;
That, being fuddled, he went reeling through
The corridor, and scarce upright could reach
The stair-head; that being glutted as a leach,
And used, as we ourselves have just now said,
To manage stairs reversely, like a peach
Too ripe, he fell, being puzzled in his head
With liquor and the staircase: verdict—*found stone dead.*

LXXI.

This, as a falsehood, Crafticanto treats;
And as his style is of strange elegance,
Gentle and tender, full of soft conceits,
(Much like our Boswell's), we will take a glance
At his sweet prose, and, if we can, make dance
His woven periods into careless rhyme;
O, little faery Pegasus! rear—prance—
Trot round the quarto—ordinary time!
March, little Pegasus, with pawing hoof sublime!

LXXII.

Well, let us see,—*tenth book and chapter nine*,—
Thus Crafticant pursues his diary:—
'Twas twelve o'clock at night, the weather fine,
Latitude thirty-six; our scouts descry
A flight of starlings making rapidly
Tow'rds Thibet. Mem.:—birds fly in the night;
From twelve to half-past—wings not fit to fly
For a thick fog—the Princess sulky quite:
Call'd for an extra shawl, and gave her nurse a bite.

LXXIII.

Five minutes before one—brought down a moth
With my new double-barrel—stew'd the thighs,
And made a very tolerable broth—
Princess turn'd dainty, to our great surprise,
Alter'd her mind, and thought it very nice:

Seeing her pleasant, tried her with a pun,
She frown'd; a monstrous owl across us flies
About this time,—a sad old figure of fun:
Bad omen—this new match can't be a happy one.

LXXIV.

From two to half-past, dusky way we made,
Above the plains of Gobi,—desert, bleak;
Beheld afar off, in the hooded shade
Of darkness, a great mountain (strange to speak),
Spitting, from forth its sulphur-baken peak,
A fan-shaped burst of blood-red, arrowy fire,
Turban'd with smoke, which still away did reek,
Solid and black from that eternal pyre,
Upon the laden winds that scantly could respire.

LXXV.

Just upon three o'clock, a falling star
Created an alarm among our troop,
Kill'd a man-cook, a page, and broke a jar,
A tureen, and three dishes, at one swoop,
Then passing by the Princess, singed her hoop:
Could not conceive what Coralline was at,
She clapp'd her hands three times, and cried out
"Whoop!"
Some strange Imaian custom. A large bat
Came sudden 'fore my face, and brush'd against my
hat.

LXXVI.

Five minutes thirteen seconds after three,
Far in the west a mighty fire broke out,
Conjectured, on the instant, it might be
The city of Balk—'twas Balk beyond all doubt:
A griffin, wheeling here and there about,
Kept reconnoitring us—doubled our guard—
Lighted our torches, and kept up a shout,
Till he sheer'd off—the Princess very scared—
And many on their marrow-bones for death prepared.

LXXVII.

At half-past three arose the cheerful moon—
Bivouac'd for four minutes on a cloud—
Where from the earth we heard a lively tune
Of tambourines and pipes, serene and loud,
While on a flowery lawn a brilliant crowd
Cinque-parted danced, some half asleep reposed
Beneath the green-fan'd cedars, some did shroud
In silken tents, and 'mid light fragrance dosed,
Or on the open turf their soothed eyelids closed.

LXXVIII.

Dropp'd my gold watch, and kill'd a kettle-drum—
It went for apoplexy—foolish folks!—
Left it to pay the piper—a good sum—
(I 've got a conscience, maugre people's jokes,)
To scrape a little favour; 'gan to coax

Her Highness' pug-dog—got a sharp rebuff—
She wish'd a game at whist—made three revokes—
Turn'd from myself, her partner, in a huff;
His Majesty will know her temper time enough.

LXXIX.

She cried for chess—I play'd a game with her—
Castled her king with such a vixen look,
It bodes ill to his Majesty—(refer
To the second chapter of my fortieth book,
And see what hoity-toity airs she took:)
At half-past four the morn essay'd to beam—
Saluted, as we pass'd, an early rook—
The Princess fell asleep, and, in her dream,
Talk'd of one Master Hubert, deep in her esteem.

LXXX.

About this time,—making delightful way,—
Shed a quill-feather from my larboard wing—
Wish'd, trusted, hoped 'twas no sign of decay—
Thank Heaven, I 'm hearty yet!—'twas no such thing:—
At five the golden light began to spring,
With fiery shudder through the bloomed east;
At six we heard Panthea's churches ring—
The city all his unhived swarms had cast,
To watch our grand approach, and hail us as we pass'd.

LXXXI.

As flowers turn their faces to the sun,
So on our flight with hungry eyes they gaze,
And, as we shaped our course, this, that way run,
With mad-cap pleasure, or hand-clasp'd amaze:
Sweet in the air a mild-toned music plays,
And progresses through its own labyrinth;
Buds gather'd from the green spring's middle-days,
They scatter'd,—daisy, primrose, hyacinth,—
Or round white columns wreath'd from capital to plinth.

LXXXII.

Onward we floated o'er the panting streets,
That seem'd throughout with upheld faces paved;
Look where we will, our bird's-eye vision meets
Legions of holiday; bright standards waved,
And fluttering ensigns emulously craved
Our minute's glance; a busy thunderous roar,
From square to square, among the buildings raved,
As when the sea, at flow, gluts up once more
The craggy hollowness of a wild-reefed shore.

LXXXIII.

And "Bellanaine for ever!" shouted they!
While that fair Princess, from her winged chair,
Bow'd low with high demeanour, and, to pay
Their new-blown loyalty with guerdon fair,
Still emptied, at meet distance, here and there,

A plenty horn of jewels. And here I
(Who wish to give the devil her due) declare
Against that ugly piece of calumny,
Which calls them Highland pebble-stones not worth a fly.

LXXXIV.

Still "Bellanaine!" they shouted, while we glide
'Slant to a light Ionic portico,
The city's delicacy, and the pride
Of our Imperial Basilic; a row
Of lords and ladies, on each hand, make show
Submissive of knee-bent obeisance,
All down the steps; and, as we enter'd, lo!
The strangest sight—the most unlook'd-for chance—
All things turn'd topsy-turvy in a devil's dance.

LXXXV.

'Stead of his anxious Majesty and court
At the open doors, with wide saluting eyes,
Congées and scrape-graces of every sort,
And all the smooth routine of gallantries,
Was seen, to our immoderate surprise,
A motley crowd thick gather'd in the hall,
Lords, scullions, deputy-scullions, with wild cries
Stunning the vestibule from wall to wall,
Where the Chief Justice on his knees and hands doth crawl.

LXXXVI.

Counts of the palace, and the state purveyor
Of moth's down, to make soft the royal beds,
The Common Council and my fool Lord Mayor
Marching a-row, each other slipshod treads;
Powder'd bag-wigs and ruffy-tuffy heads
Of cinder wenches meet and soil each other;
Toe crush'd with heel ill-natured fighting breeds,
Frill-rumpling elbows brew up many a bother,
And fists in the short ribs keep up the yell and pother.

LXXXVII.

A Poet, mounted on the Court-Clown's back,
Rode to the Princess swift with spurring heels,
And close into her face, with rhyming clack,
Began a Prothalamion;—she reels,
She falls, she faints! while laughter peals
Over her woman's weakness. "Where!" cried I,
"Where is his Majesty?" No person feels
Inclined to answer; wherefore instantly
I plunged into the crowd to find him or to die.

LXXXVIII.

Jostling my way I gain'd the stairs, and ran
To the first landing, where, incredible!
I met, far gone in liquor, that old man,
That vile impostor Hum,———

So far so well,—
For we have proved the Mago never fell
Down stairs on Crafticanto's evidence;
And therefore duly shall proceed to tell,
Plain in our own original mood and tense,
The sequel of this day, though labour 'tis immense!

* * * *

(*No more was written.*)

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

ODE TO APOLLO.

Feb. 1815.

I.

In thy western halls of gold
When thou sittest in thy state,
Bards, that erst sublimely told
Heroic deeds, and sang of fate,
With fervour seize their adamantine lyres,
Whose chords are solid rays, and twinkle radiant fires.

II.

Here Homer with his nervous arms
Strikes the twanging harp of war,
And even the western splendour warms,
While the trumpets sound afar:
But, what creates the most intense surprise,
His soul looks out through renovated eyes.

III.

Then, through thy Temple wide, melodious swells
The sweet majestic tone of Maro's lyre:
The soul delighted on each accent dwells,—
Enraptured dwells,—not daring to respire,
The while he tells of grief around a funeral pyre.

IV.

'Tis awful silence then again;
Expectant stand the spheres;
Breathless the laurell'd peers,
Nor move, till ends the lofty strain,
Nor move till Milton's tuneful thunders cease,
And leave once more the ravish'd heavens in peace.

V.

Thou biddest Shakspeare wave his hand,
And quickly forward spring
The Passions—a terrific band—
And each vibrates the string
That with its tyrant temper best accords,
While from their Master's lips pour forth the inspiring words.

VI.

A silver trumpet Spenser blows,
And, as its martial notes to silence flee,
From a virgin chorus flows
A hymn in praise of spotless Chastity.

'Tis still! Wild warblings from the Æolian lyre
Enchantment softly breathe, and tremblingly expire.

VII.

Next thy Tasso's ardent numbers
Float along the pleased air,
Calling youth from idle slumbers,
Rousing them from Pleasure's lair:—
Then o'er the strings his fingers gently move,
And melt the soul to pity and to love.

VIII.

But when *Thou* joinest with the Nine,
And all the powers of song combine,
We listen here on earth:
The dying tones that fill the air,
And charm the ear of evening fair,
From thee, great God of Bards, receive their heavenly birth.

HYMN TO APOLLO.

God of the golden bow,
And of the golden lyre,
And of the golden hair,
And of the golden fire,
Charioteer
Of the patient year,
Where—where slept thine ire,
When like a blank idiot I put on thy wreath,
Thy laurel, thy glory,
The light of thy story,
Or was I a worm—too low crawling, for death?
O Delphic Apollo!

The Thunderer grasp'd and grasp'd,
The Thunderer frown'd and frown'd;
The eagle's feathery mane
For wrath became stiffen'd—the sound
Of breeding thunder
Went drowsily under,
Muttering to be unbound.

O why didst thou pity, and for a worm
Why touch thy soft lute
Till the thunder was mute,
Why was not I crush'd—such a pitiful germ?
O Delphic Apollo!

The Pleiades were up,
Watching the silent air;
The seeds and roots in the Earth
Were swelling for summer fare;
The Ocean, its neighbour,
Was at its old labour,
When, who—who did dare
To tie, like a madman, thy plant round his brow,
And grin and look proudly,
And blaspheme so loudly,
And live for that honour, to stoop to thee now?
O Delphic Apollo!

ON . . . .

1817.

THINK not of it, sweet one, so ;—
Give it not a tear ;
Sigh thou mayst, and bid it go
Any—any where.

Do not look so sad, sweet one,—
Sad and fadingly ;
Shed one drop (and *only* one),
Oh ! 'twas born to die !

Still so pale ? then dearest weep ;
Weep, I 'll count the tears,
For each will I invent a bliss
For thee in after years.

Brighter has it left thine eyes
Than a sunny rill ;
And thy whispering melodies
Are more tender still.

Yet—as all things mourn awhile
At fleeting blisses ;
Let us too ; but be our dirge
A dirge of kisses.

LINES.

1817.

UNFELT, unheard, unseen,
I 've left my little queen,
Her languid arms in silver slumber lying:
Ah! through their nestling touch,
Who—who could tell how much
There is for madness—cruel, or complying?

Those faery lids how sleek!
Those lips how moist!—they speak,
In ripest quiet, shadows of sweet sounds:
Into my fancy's ear
Melting a burden dear,
How "Love doth know no fullness, and no bounds."

True!—tender monitors!
I bend unto your laws:
This sweetest day for dalliance was born!
So, without more ado,
I 'll feel my heaven anew,
For all the blushing of the hasty morn.

SONG.

1818.

I.

Hush, hush! tread softly! hush, hush, my dear!
All the house is asleep, but we know very well
That the jealous, the jealous old bald-pate may hear,
Tho' you 've padded his night-cap—O sweet Isabel!
Tho' your feet are more light than a Faery's feet.
Who dances on bubbles where brooklets meet,—
Hush, hush! soft tiptoe! hush, hush, my dear!
For less than a nothing the jealous can hear.

II.

No leaf doth tremble, no ripple is there
On the river,—all 's still, and the night's sleepy eye
Closes up, and forgets all its Lethean care,
Charm'd to death by the drone of the humming
May-fly;
And the moon, whether prudish or complaisant,
Has fled to her bower, well knowing I want
No light in the dusk, no torch in the gloom,
But my Isabel's eyes, and her lips pulp'd with bloom.

III.

Lift the latch! ah gently! ah tenderly—sweet!
We are dead if that latchet gives one little clink!
Well done—now those lips, and a flowery seat—
The old man may sleep, and the planets may wink;
The shut rose shall dream of our loves and awake
Full-blown, and such warmth for the morning take,
The stock-dove shall hatch his soft twin-eggs and coo,
While I kiss to the melody, aching all through!

SONG.

1818.

I HAD a dove and the sweet dove died;
And I have thought it died of grieving:
O, what could it grieve for? Its feet were tied,
With a silken thread of my own hand's weaving;
Sweet little red feet! why should you die—
Why would you leave me, sweet bird! why?
You lived alone in the forest-tree,
Why, pretty thing! would you not live with me?
I kiss'd you oft and gave you white peas;
Why not live sweetly, as in the green trees?

FAERY SONG.

SHED no tear! O, shed no tear!
The flower will bloom another year.
Weep no more! O! weep no more!
Young buds sleep in the root's white core.
Dry your eyes! Oh! dry your eyes!
For I was taught in Paradise
To ease my breast of melodies—
Shed no tear.

Overhead! look overhead!
'Mong the blossoms white and red—
Look up, look up. I flutter now
On this flush pomegranate bough.
See me! 'tis this silvery bill
Ever cures the good man's ill.
Shed no tear! O shed no tear!
The flower will bloom another year.
Adieu, Adieu—I fly, adieu,
I vanish in the heaven's blue—
Adieu, Adieu!

SONG.

Spirit here that reignest!
Spirit here that painest!
Spirit here that burnest!
Spirit here that mournest!
Spirit! I bow
My forehead low,
Enshaded with thy pinions!
Spirit! I look,
All passion-struck,
Into thy pale dominions!

Spirit here that laughest!
Spirit here that quaffest!
Spirit here that dancest!
Noble soul that prancest!
Spirit! with thee
I join in the glee,
While nudging the elbow of Momus!
Spirit! I flush
With a Bacchanal blush,
Just fresh from the banquet of Comus!

FAERY SONG.

Ah! woe is me! poor silver-wing!
That I must chaunt thy lady's dirge,
And death to this fair haunt of spring,
Of melody, and streams of flowery verge,—
Poor silver-wing! ah! woe is me!
That I must see
These blossoms snow upon thy lady's pall!
Go, pretty page! and in her ear
Whisper that the hour is near!
Softly tell her not to fear
Such calm favonian burial!
Go, pretty page! and soothly tell,—
The blossoms hang by a melting spell,
And fall they must, ere a star wink thrice
Upon her closed eyes,
That now in vain are weeping their last tears,
At sweet life leaving, and these arbours green,—
Rich dowry from the Spirit of the Spheres,—
Alas! poor Queen!

EXTRACTS FROM AN OPERA.

1818.

O! WERE I one of the Olympian twelve,
Their godships should pass this into a law,—
That when a man doth set himself in toil
After some beauty veiled far away,
Each step he took should make his lady's hand
More soft, more white, and her fair cheek more fair;
And for each briar-berry he might eat,
A kiss should bud upon the tree of love,
And pulp and ripen richer every hour,
To melt away upon the traveller's lips.

* * * * *

DAISY'S SONG.

I.

The sun, with his great eye,
Sees not so much as I;
And the moon, all silver, proud,
Might as well be in a cloud.

II.

And O the spring—the spring!
I lead the life of a king!

Couch'd in the teeming grass,
I spy each pretty lass.

III.

I look where no one dares,
And I stare where no one stares,
And when the night is nigh,
Lambs bleat my lullaby.

* * * * *

FOLLY'S SONG.

When wedding fiddles are a-playing,
Huzza for folly O!
And when maidens go a-Maying,
Huzza, &c.
When a milk-pail is upset,
Huzza, &c.
And the clothes left in the wet,
Huzza, &c.
When the barrel 's set abroach,
Huzza, &c.
When Kate Eyebrow keeps a coach,
Huzza, &c.
When the pig is over-roasted,
Huzza, &c.
And the cheese is over-toasted,
Huzza, &c.

When Sir Snap is with his lawyer,
Huzza, &c.
And Miss Chip has kiss'd the sawyer;
Huzza, &c.

* * * * *

O, I am frighten'd with most hateful thoughts!
Perhaps her voice is not a nightingale's,
Perhaps her teeth are not the fairest pearl;
Her eye-lashes may be, for aught I know,
Not longer than the May-fly's small fan-horns;
There may not be one dimple on her hand;
And freckles many; ah! a careless nurse,
In haste to teach the little thing to walk,
May have crumpt up a pair of Dian's legs,
And warpt the ivory of a Juno's neck.

* * * * *

SONG.

I.

The stranger lighted from his steed,
And ere he spake a word,
He seized my lady's lily hand,
And kiss'd it all unheard.

II.

The stranger walk'd into the hall,
And ere he spake a word,
He kiss'd my lady's cherry lips,
And kiss'd 'em all unheard.

III.

The stranger walk'd into the bower,—
But my lady first did go,—
Aye hand in hand into the bower,
Where my lord's roses blow.

IV.

My lady's maid had a silken scarf,
And a golden ring had she,
And a kiss from the stranger, as off he went
Again on his fair palfrey.

* * * * *

Asleep! O sleep a little while, white pearl!
And let me kneel, and let me pray to thee,
And let me call Heaven's blessing on thine eyes,
And let me breathe into the happy air,
That doth enfold and touch thee all about,
Vows of my slavery, my giving up,
My sudden adoration, my great love!

LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI.

A BALLAD. 1819.

I.

O WHAT can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge has wither'd from the lake,
And no birds sing.

II.

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms!
So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
And the harvest 's done.

III.

I see a lily on thy brow
With anguish moist and fever dew,
And on thy cheeks a fading rose
Fast withereth too.

IV.

I met a lady in the meads,
Full beautiful—a faery's child,
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

V.

I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She look'd at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan.

VI.

I set her on my pacing steed,
And nothing else saw all day long,
For sidelong would she bend, and sing
A faery's song.

VII.

She found me roots of relish sweet,
And honey wild, and manna dew,
And sure in language strange she said—
"I love thee true."

VIII.

She took me to her elfin grot,
And there she wept, and sigh'd full sore,
And there I shut her wild wild eyes
With kisses four.

IX.

And there she lulled me asleep,
And there I dream'd—Ah! woe betide!
The latest dream I ever dream'd
On the cold hill's side.

X.

I saw pale kings and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
They cried—"La Belle Dame sans Merci
Hath thee in thrall!"

XI.

I saw their starved lips in the gloam,
With horrid warning gaped wide,
And I awoke and found me here,
On the cold hill's side.

XII.

And this is why I sojourn here,
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is wither'd from the lake,
And no birds sing.

SONG OF FOUR FAIRIES,

FIRE, AIR, EARTH, AND WATER,

SALAMANDER, ZEPHYR, DUSKETHA, AND BREAMA.

1819.

Sal. HAPPY, happy glowing fire!
Zep. Fragrant air! delicious light!
Dus. Let me to my glooms retire!
Bre. I to green-weed rivers bright!
Sal. Happy, happy glowing fire!
Dazzling bowers of soft retire,
Ever let my nourish'd wing,
Like a bat's, still wandering,
Faintly fan your fiery spaces,
Spirit sole in deadly places.
In unhaunted roar and blaze,
Open eyes that never daze,
Let me see the myriad shapes
Of men, and beasts, and fish, and apes,
Portray'd in many a fiery den,
And wrought by spumy bitumen.
On the deep intenser roof,
Arched every way aloof,

Let me breathe upon their skies,
And anger their live tapestries;
Free from cold, and every care,
Of chilly rain, and shivering air.

Zep. Spirit of Fire! away! away!
Or your very roundelay
Will sear my plumage newly budded
From its quilled sheath, all studded
With the self-same dews that fell
On the May-grown Asphodel.
Spirit of Fire—away! away!

Bre. Spirit of Fire—away! away!
Zephyr, blue-eyed fairy, turn,
And see my cool sedge-buried urn,
Where it rests its mossy brim
'Mid water-mint and cresses dim;
And the flowers, in sweet troubles,
Lift their eyes above the bubbles,
Like our Queen, when she would please
To sleep, and Oberon *will* tease.
Love me, blue-eyed Fairy! true,
Soothly I am sick for you.

Zep. Gentle Breama! by the first
Violet young nature nurst,
I will bathe myself with thee,
So you sometimes follow me
To my home, far, far, in west,

Beyond the nimble-wheeled quest
Of the golden-browed sun:
Come with me, o'er tops of trees,
To my fragrant palaces,
Where they ever floating are
Beneath the cherish of a star
Call'd Vesper, who with silver veil
Ever hides his brilliance pale,
Ever gently-drows'd doth keep
Twilight for the Fayes to sleep.
Fear not that your watery hair
Will thirst in drouthy ringlets there;
Clouds of stored summer rains
Thou shalt taste, before the stains
Of the mountain soil they take,
And too unlucent for thee make.
I love thee, crystal Fairy, true!
Sooth I am as sick for you!

Sal. Out, ye aguish Fairies, out!
Chilly lovers, what a rout
Keep ye with your frozen breath,
Colder than the mortal death.
Adder-eyed Dusketha, speak,
Shall we leave these, and go seek
In the earth's wide entrails old
Couches warm as their's are cold?
O for a fiery gloom and thee,

Dusketha, so enchantingly
Freckle-wing'd and lizard-sided!

Dus. By thee, Sprite, will I be guided!
I care not for cold or heat;
Frost and flame, or sparks, or sleet,
To my essence are the same;—
But I honour more the flame.
Sprite of Fire, I follow thee
Wheresoever it may be,
To the torrid spouts and fountains,
Underneath earth-quaked mountains;
Or, at thy supreme desire,
Touch the very pulse of fire
With my bare unlidded eyes.

Sal. Sweet Dusketha! paradise!
Off, ye icy Spirits, fly!
Frosty creatures of the sky!

Dus. Breathe upon them, fiery sprite!

Zep.
Bre. } Away! away to our delight!

Sal. Go, feed on icicles, while we
Bedded in tongue-flames will be.

Dus. Lead me to those feverous glooms,
Sprite of Fire!

Bre. Me to the blooms,
Blue-eyed Zephyr, of those flowers
Far in the west where the May-cloud lowers;

And the beams of still Vesper, when winds
are all wist,
Are shed thro' the rain and the milder mist,
And twilight your floating bowers.

ODE ON INDOLENCE.

1819.

"They toil not, neither do they spin."

I.

ONE morn before me were three figures seen,
With bowed necks, and joined hands, side-faced;
And one behind the other stepp'd serene,
In placid sandals, and in white robes graced;
They pass'd, like figures on a marble urn,
When shifted round to see the other side;
They came again; as when the urn once more
Is shifted round, the first seen shades return;
And they were strange to me, as may betide
With vases, to one deep in Phidian lore.

II.

How is it, Shadows! that I knew ye not?
How came ye muffled in so hush a mask?
Was it a silent deep-disguised plot
To steal away, and leave without a task
My idle days? Ripe was the drowsy hour;
The blissful cloud of summer-indolence

Benumb'd my eyes; my pulse grew less and less;
Pain had no sting, and pleasure's wreath no flower:
O, why did ye not melt, and leave my sense
Unhaunted quite of all but—nothingness?

III.

A third time pass'd they by, and, passing, turn'd
Each one the face a moment whiles to me;
Then faded, and to follow them I burn'd
And ached for wings, because I knew the three;
The first was a fair Maid, and Love her name;
The second was Ambition, pale of cheek,
And ever watchful with fatigued eye;
The last, whom I love more, the more of blame
Is heap'd upon her, maiden most unmeek,—
I knew to be my demon Poesy.

IV.

They faded, and, forsooth! I wanted wings:
O folly! What is Love? and where is it?
And for that poor Ambition! it springs
From a man's little heart's short fever-fit;
For Poesy!—no,—she has not a joy,—
At least for me,—so sweet as drowsy noons,
And evenings steep'd in honied indolence;
O, for an age so shelter'd from annoy,
That I may never know how change the moons,
Or hear the voice of busy common-sense!

v.

And once more came they by;—alas! wherefore?
My sleep had been embroider'd with dim dreams;
My soul had been a lawn besprinkled o'er
With flowers, and stirring shades, and baffled beams:
The morn was clouded, but no shower fell,
Tho' in her lids hung the sweet tears of May;
The open casement press'd a new-leaved vine,
Let in the budding warmth and throstle's lay;
O Shadows! 'twas a time to bid farewell!
Upon your skirts had fallen no tears of mine.

vi.

So, ye three Ghosts, adieu! Ye cannot raise
My head cool-bedded in the flowery grass;
For I would not be dieted with praise,
A pet-lamb in a sentimental farce!
Fade softly from my eyes, and be once more
In masque-like figures on the dreamy urn;
Farewell! I yet have visions for the night,
And for the day faint visions there is store;
Vanish, ye Phantoms! from my idle spright,
Into the clouds, and never more return!

THE EVE OF SAINT MARK.

(UNFINISHED.)

1819.

Upon a Sabbath-day it fell;
Twice holy was the Sabbath-bell,
That call'd the folk to evening prayer;
The city streets were clean and fair
From wholesome drench of April rains;
And, on the western window panes,
The chilly sunset faintly told
Of unmatured green, vallies cold,
Of the green thorny bloomless hedge,
Of rivers new with spring-tide sedge,
Of primroses by shelter'd rills,
And daisies on the aguish hills.
Twice holy was the Sabbath-bell:
The silent streets were crowded well
With staid and pious companies,
Warm from their fire-side orat'ries;
And moving, with demurest air,
To even-song, and vesper prayer.
Each arched porch, and entry low,
Was fill'd with patient folk and slow,

With whispers hush, and shuffling feet,
While play'd the organ loud and sweet.

The bells had ceased, the prayers begun,
And Bertha had not yet half done
A curious volume, patch'd and torn,
That all day long, from earliest morn,
Had taken captive her two eyes,
Among its golden broideries;
Perplex'd her with a thousand things,—
The stars of Heaven, and angels' wings,
Martyrs in a fiery blaze,
Azure saints and silver rays,
Moses' breastplate, and the seven
Candlesticks John saw in Heaven,
The winged Lion of Saint Mark,
And the Covenantal Ark,
With its many mysteries,
Cherubim and golden mice.

Bertha was a maiden fair,
Dwelling in th' old Minster-square;
From her fire-side she could see,
Sidelong, its rich antiquity,
Far as the Bishop's garden-wall;
Where sycamores and elm-trees tall,
Full-leaved, the forest had outstript,
By no sharp north-wind ever nipt,

So shelter'd by the mighty pile.
Bertha arose, and read awhile,
With forehead 'gainst the window-pane.
Again she tried, and then again,
Until the dusk eve left her dark
Upon the legend of St. Mark.
From plaited lawn-frill, fine and thin,
She lifted up her soft warm chin,
With aching neck and swimming eyes,
And dazed with saintly imag'ries.

All was gloom, and silent all,
Save now and then the still foot-fall
Of one returning homewards late,
Past the echoing minster-gate.
The clamorous daws, that all the day
Above tree-tops and towers play,
Pair by pair had gone to rest,
Each in its ancient belfry-nest,
Where asleep they fall betimes,
To music and the drowsy chimes.

All was silent, all was gloom,
Abroad and in the homely room:
Down she sat, poor cheated soul!
And struck a lamp from the dismal coal;
Leaned forward, with bright drooping hair
And slant book, full against the glare.

Her shadow, in uneasy guise,
Hover'd about, a giant size,
On ceiling-beam and old oak chair,
The parrot's cage, and panel square;
And the warm angled winter-screen,
On which were many monsters seen,
Call'd doves of Siam, Lima mice,
And legless birds of Paradise,
Macaw, and tender Av'davat,
And silken-furr'd Angora cat.
Untired she read, her shadow still
Glower'd about, as it would fill
The room with wildest forms and shades,
As though some ghostly queen of spades
Had come to mock behind her back,
And dance, and ruffle her garments black.
Untired she read the legend page,
Of holy Mark, from youth to age,
On land, on sea, in pagan chains,
Rejoicing for his many pains.
Sometimes the learned eremite,
With golden star, or dagger bright,
Referr'd to pious poesies
Written in smallest crow-quill size
Beneath the text; and thus the rhyme
Was parcell'd out from time to time:
——"Als writith he of swevenis,

Men han beforne they wake in bliss,
Whanne that hir friendes thinke him bound
In crimped shroude farre under grounde;
And how a litling child mote be
A saint er its nativitie,
Gif that the modre (God her blesse!)
Kepen in solitarinesse,
And kissen devoute the holy croce.
Of Goddes love, and Sathan's force,—
He writith; and thinges many mo ..
Of swiche thinges I may not shew.
Bot I must tellen verilie
Somdel of Saintè Cicilie,
And chieflie what he auctorethe
Of Saintè Markis life and dethe:"

At length her constant eyelids come
Upon the fervent martyrdom;
Then lastly to his holy shrine,
Exalt amid the tapers' shine
At Venice,—

TO FANNY. Brawne.

PHYSICIAN Nature! let my spirit blood!
O ease my heart of verse and let me rest;
Throw me upon thy Tripod, till the flood
Of stifling numbers ebbs from my full breast.
A theme! a theme! great nature! give a theme;
Let me begin my dream.
I come—I see thee, as thou standest there,
Beckon me not into the wintry air.

Ah! dearest love, sweet home of all my fears,
And hopes, and joys, and panting miseries,—
To-night, if I may guess, thy beauty wears
A smile of such delight,
As brilliant and as bright,
As when with ravished, aching, vassal eyes,
Lost in soft amaze,
I gaze, I gaze!

Who now, with greedy looks, eats up my feast?
What stare outfaces now my silver moon!
Ah! keep that hand unravished at the least;
Let, let, the amorous burn—
But, pr'ythee, do not turn

The current of your heart from me so soon.
O! save, in charity,
The quickest pulse for me.

Save it for me, sweet love! though music breathe
Voluptuous visions into the warm air,
Though swimming through the dance's dangerous wreath;
Be like an April day,
Smiling and cold and gay,
A temperate lily, temperate as fair;
Then, Heaven! there will be
A warmer June for me.

Why, this—you 'll say, my Fanny! is not true:
Put your soft hand upon your snowy side,
Where the heart beats: confess—'tis nothing new—
Must not a woman be
A feather on the sea,
Sway'd to and fro by every wind and tide?
Of as uncertain speed
As blow-ball from the mead?

I know it—and to know it is despair
To one who loves you as I love, sweet Fanny!
Whose heart goes flutt'ring for you every where,
Nor, when away you roam,
Dare keep its wretched home,

Love, love alone, his pains severe and many:
Then, loveliest! keep me free,
From torturing jealousy.

Ah! if you prize my subdued soul above
The poor, the fading, brief, pride of an hour;
Let none profane my Holy See of love,
Or with a rude hand break
The sacramental cake:
Let none else touch the just new-budded flower;
If not—may my eyes close,
Love! on their lost repose.

SONNETS.

1816.

I.

Oh! how I love, on a fair summer's eve,
When streams of light pour down the golden west,
And on the balmy zephyrs tranquil rest
The silver clouds, far—far away to leave
All meaner thoughts, and take a sweet reprieve
From little cares; to find, with easy quest,
A fragrant wild, with Nature's beauty drest,
And there into delight my soul deceive.
There warm my breast with patriotic lore,
Musing on Milton's fate—on Sydney's bier—
Till their stern forms before my mind arise:
Perhaps on wing of Poesy upsoar,
Full often dropping a delicious tear,
When some melodious sorrow spells mine eyes.

II.

TO A YOUNG LADY WHO SENT ME A LAUREL CROWN.

FRESH morning gusts have blown away all fear
From my glad bosom,—now from gloominess
I mount for ever—not an atom less
Than the proud laurel shall content my bier.
No! by the eternal stars! or why sit here
In the Sun's eye, and 'gainst my temples press
Apollo's very leaves, woven to bless
By thy white fingers and thy spirit clear.
Lo! who dares say, "Do this?" Who dares call down
My will from its high purpose? Who say, "Stand,"
Or "Go?" This mighty moment I would frown
On abject Cæsars—not the stoutest band
Of mailed heroes should tear off my crown:
Yet would I kneel and kiss thy gentle hand!

III.

Jan. 1817.

After dark vapours have oppress'd our plains
For a long dreary season, comes a day
Born of the gentle South, and clears away
From the sick heavens all unseemly stains.
The anxious mouth, relieved from its pains,
Takes as a long-lost right the feel of May,
The eyelids with the passing coolness play,
Like rose leaves with the drip of summer rains.
And calmest thoughts come round us—as, of leaves
Budding,—fruit ripening in stillness,—autumn suns
Smiling at eve upon the quiet sheaves,—
Sweet Sappho's cheek,—a sleeping infant's breath,—
The gradual sand that through an hour-glass runs,—
A woodland rivulet,—a Poet's death.

IV.

WRITTEN ON THE BLANK SPACE OF A LEAF AT THE END OF CHAUCER'S TALE OF "THE FLOWRE AND THE LEFE."

Feb. 1817.

THIS pleasant tale is like a little copse:
The honied lines so freshly interlace,
To keep the reader in so sweet a place,
So that he here and there full-hearted stops;
And oftentimes he feels the dewy drops
Come cool and suddenly against his face,
And, by the wandering melody, may trace
Which way the tender-legged linnet hops.
Oh! what a power has white simplicity!
What mighty power has this gentle story!
I, that do ever feel athirst for glory,
Could at this moment be content to lie
Meekly upon the grass, as those whose sobbings
Were heard of none beside the mournful robins.

V.

ON THE SEA.

Aug. 1817.

It keeps eternal whisperings around
Desolate shores, and with its mighty swell
Gluts twice ten thousand caverns, till the spell
Of Hecate leaves them their old shadowy sound.
Often 'tis in such gentle temper found,
That scarcely will the very smallest shell
Be moved for days from where it sometime fell,
When last the winds of heaven were unbound.
Oh ye! who have your eye-balls vexed and tired,
Feast them upon the wideness of the Sea;
Oh ye! whose ears are dinn'd with uproar rude,
Or fed too much with cloying melody,—
Sit ye near some old cavern's mouth, and brood
Until ye start, as if the sea-nymphs quired!

VI.

ON LEIGH HUNT'S POEM, THE "STORY OF RIMINI."

1817.

Who loves to peer up at the morning sun,
With half-shut eyes and comfortable cheek,
Let him, with this sweet tale, full often seek
For meadows where the little rivers run;
Who loves to linger with that brightest one
Of Heaven—Hesperus—let him lowly speak
These numbers to the night, and starlight meek,
Or moon, if that her hunting be begun.
He who knows these delights, and too is prone
To moralise upon a smile or tear,
Will find at once a region of his own,
A bower for his spirit, and will steer
To alleys, where the fir-tree drops its cone,
Where robins hop, and fallen leaves are sear.

VII.

1817.

When I have fears that I may cease to be
Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain,
Before high piled books, in charact'ry,
Hold like rich garners the full-ripen'd grain;
When I behold, upon the night's starr'd face,
Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
And think that I may never live to trace
Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance;
And when I feel, fair creature of an hour!
That I shall never look upon thee more,
Never have relish in the faery power
Of unreflecting love!—then on the shore
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
Till Love and Fame to nothingness do sink.

VIII.

TO HOMER.

1818.

STANDING aloof in giant ignorance,
Of thee I hear and of the Cyclades,
As one who sits ashore and longs perchance
To visit dolphin-coral in deep seas.
So thou wast blind!—but then the veil was rent,
For Jove uncurtain'd Heaven to let thee live,
And Neptune made for thee a spermy tent,
And Pan made sing for thee his forest-hive;
Aye, on the shores of darkness there is light,
And precipices show untrodden green;
There is a budding morrow in midnight;
There is a triple sight in blindness keen;
Such seeing hadst thou, as it once befel,
To Dian, Queen of Earth, and Heaven, and Hell.

IX.

ANSWER TO A SONNET ENDING THUS:—

"Dark eyes are dearer far
Than those that made the hyacinthine bell;"

By J. H. Reynolds.

Feb. 1818.

Blue! 'Tis the life of heaven,—the domain
Of Cynthia,—the wide palace of the sun,—
The tent of Hesperus, and all his train,—
The bosomer of clouds, gold, grey and dun.
Blue! 'Tis the life of waters—ocean
And all its vassal streams: pools numberless
May rage, and foam, and fret, but never can
Subside, if not to dark-blue nativeness.
Blue! Gentle cousin of the forest-green,
Married to green in all the sweetest flowers—
Forget-me-not,—the blue bell,—and, that queen
Of secrecy, the violet: what strange powers
Hast thou, as a mere shadow! But how great,
When in an Eye thou art alive with fate!

X.

TO J. H. REYNOLDS.

O THAT a week could be an age, and we
Felt parting and warm meeting every week,
Then one poor year a thousand years would be,
The flush of welcome ever on the cheek:
So could we live long life in little space,
So time itself would be annihilate,
So a day's journey in oblivious haze
To serve our joys would lengthen and dilate.
O to arrive each Monday morn from Ind!
To land each Tuesday from the rich Levant!
In little time a host of joys to bind,
And keep our souls in one eternal pant!
This morn, my friend, and yester-evening taught
Me how to harbour such a happy thought.

XI.

TO ——*

TIME's sea hath been five years at its slow ebb;
Long hours have to and fro let creep the sand;
Since I was tangled in thy beauty's web,
And snared by the ungloving of thine hand.
And yet I never look on midnight sky,
But I behold thine eyes' well memoried light;
I cannot look upon the rose's dye,
But to thy cheek my soul doth take its flight;
I cannot look on any budding flower,
But my fond ear, in fancy at thy lips,
And harkening for a love-sound, doth devour
Its sweets in the wrong sense: — Thou dost eclipse
Every delight with sweet remembering,
And grief unto my darling joys dost bring.

* A lady whom he saw for some few moments at Vauxhall.

XII.

TO SLEEP.

1819.

O soft embalmer of the still midnight!
Shutting, with careful fingers and benign,
Our gloom-pleased eyes, embower'd from the light,
Enshaded in forgetfulness divine;
O soothest Sleep! if so it please thee, close,
In midst of this thine hymn, my willing eyes,
Or wait the amen, ere thy poppy throws
Around my bed its lulling charities;
Then save me, or the passed day will shine
Upon my pillow, breeding many woes;
Save me from curious conscience, that still lords
Its strength, for darkness burrowing like a mole;
Turn the key deftly in the oiled wards,
And seal the hushed casket of my soul.

XIII.

ON FAME.

1819.

FAME, like a wayward girl, will still be coy
To those who woo her with too slavish knees,
But makes surrender to some thoughtless boy,
And dotes the more upon a heart at ease;
She is a Gipsey,—will not speak to those
Who have not learnt to be content without her;
A Jilt, whose ear was never whisper'd close,
Who thinks they scandal her who talk about her;
A very Gipsey is she, Nilus-born,
Sister-in-law to jealous Potiphar;
Ye love-sick Bards! repay her scorn for scorn;
Ye Artists lovelorn! madmen that ye are!
Make your best bow to her and bid adieu,
Then, if she likes it, she will follow you.

XIV.

ON FAME.

"You cannot eat your cake and have it too."—*Proverb.*

1819.

How fever'd is the man, who cannot look
  Upon his mortal days with temperate blood,
Who vexes all the leaves of his life's book,
  And robs his fair name of its maidenhood;
It is as if the rose should pluck herself,
  Or the ripe plum finger its misty bloom,
As if a Naiad, like a meddling elf,
  Should darken her pure grot with muddy gloom:
But the rose leaves herself upon the briar,
  For winds to kiss and grateful bees to feed,
And the ripe plum still wears its dim attire,
  The undisturbed lake has crystal space;
  Why then should man, teasing the world for grace,
  Spoil his salvation for a fierce miscreed?

XV.

1819.

Why did I laugh to-night? No voice will tell:
No God, no Demon of severe response,
Deigns to reply from Heaven or from Hell.
Then to my human heart I turn at once.
Heart! Thou and I are here sad and alone;
I say, why did I laugh? O mortal pain!
O Darkness! Darkness! ever must I moan,
To question Heaven and Hell and Heart in vain.
Why did I laugh? I know this Being's lease,
My fancy to its utmost blisses spreads;
Yet would I on this very midnight cease,
And the world's gaudy ensigns see in shreds;
Verse, Fame, and Beauty are intense indeed,
But Death intenser—Death is Life's high meed.

XVI.

ON A DREAM.*

1819.

As Hermes once took to his feathers light,
When lulled Argus, baffled, swoon'd and slept,
So on a Delphic reed, my idle spright,
So play'd, so charm'd, so conquer'd, so bereft
The dragon-world of all its hundred eyes,
And seeing it asleep, so fled away,
Not to pure Ida with its snow-cold skies,
Nor unto Tempe, where Jove grieved a day,
But to that second circle of sad Hell,
Where in the gust, the whirlwind, and the flaw
Of rain and hail-stones, lovers need not tell
Their sorrows,—pale were the sweet lips I saw,
Pale were the lips I kiss'd, and fair the form
I floated with, about that melancholy storm.

* (See Vol. I., page 270.)

XVII.

1819.

If by dull rhymes our English must be chain'd,
And, like Andromeda, the Sonnet sweet
Fetter'd, in spite of pained loveliness;
Let us find out, if we must be constrain'd,
Sandals more interwoven and complete
To fit the naked foot of poesy;
Let us inspect the lyre, and weigh the stress
Of every chord, and see what may be gain'd
By ear industrious, and attention meet;
Misers of sound and syllable, no less
Than Midas of his coinage, let us be
Jealous of dead leaves in the bay wreath crown;
So, if we may not let the Muse be free,
She will be bound with garlands of her own.

XVIII.

1819.

THE day is gone, and all its sweets are gone!
Sweet voice, sweet lips, soft hand, and softer breast,
Warm breath, light whisper, tender semi-tone,
Bright eyes, accomplish'd shape, and lang'rous waist!
Faded the flower and all its budded charms,
Faded the sight of beauty from my eyes,
Faded the shape of beauty from my arms,
Faded the voice, warmth, whiteness, paradise—
Vanish'd unseasonably at shut of eve,
When the dusk holiday—or holinight
Of fragrant-curtain'd love begins to weave
The woof of darkness thick, for hid delight;
But, as I 've read love's missal through to-day,
He 'll let me sleep, seeing I fast and pray.

XIX.

1819.

I CRY your mercy—pity—love!—aye, love!
Merciful love that tantalises not,
One-thoughted, never-wandering, guileless love,
Unmask'd, and being seen—without a blot!
O! let me have thee whole,—all—all—be mine!
That shape, that fairness, that sweet minor zest
Of love, your kiss,—those hands, those eyes divine,
That warm, white, lucent, million-pleasured breast,—
Yourself—your soul—in pity give me all,
Withhold no atom's atom or I die,
Or living on perhaps, your wretched thrall,
Forget, in the mist of idle misery,
Life's purposes,—the palate of my mind
Losing its gust, and my ambition blind!

XX.

KEATS'S LAST SONNET.

BRIGHT star! would I were steadfast as thou art—
Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night,
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
Like Nature's patient sleepless Eremite,
The moving waters at their priestlike task
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
Or gazing on the new soft fallen mask
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—
No—yet still steadfast, still unchangeable,
Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast,
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,
Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever—or else swoon to death.*

* Another reading:—

Half-passionless, and so swoon on to death.

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